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Journalistic Dramatic Criticism: a Survey of Theatre Reviews in New York, 1857-1927.

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JOURNALISTIC DRAMATIC CRITICISM:
A SURVEY OF THEATRE REVIEWS IN NEW YORK, 1857-1927

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

in

The Department of Speech

By
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B. A., Rockford College, 1927
M. A., Northwestern University, 1930
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a survey of the critical element of the theatre reviews in the leading New York daily newspapers between 1857 and 1927. The daily review exerts a strong influence on Broadway and has not been analyzed heretofore. This paper, then, purposes, in making a survey of the critical elements, to examine the points fundamental to the critic's judgment of a play, namely, the range of his interests, the shifts of his critical standards and attitudes, and the nature of his criticism.

The procedure of collecting the data was to select a sampling scheme, since the material was too abundant to handle in a single study. A scheme was chosen which gave a sampling of thirteen hundred reviews: the reviews of the month of November for every third year in the twentieth century and for every fourth year in the nineteenth century were examined in three of the five available New York papers. Such available papers were The New York Herald, The Evening Post, the New York Sun, The New York Times, the New York Daily Tribune.

The treatment of the collected data was (1) to organize the critical comments under headings representing the various

elements of a performance--acting, the purpose of the performance, the written play, and the production. Each heading became a chapter of the dissertation and was subdivided several times. (2) The next step was to determine the range of the critic's interest by observing the number and variety of chapter subheads. (3) the criticism in each subhead was then analyzed to determine the changes in emphasis and attitude which occurred in reference to a single criterion throughout the seventy years under consideration. (4) Finally, the material of each subhead was reconsidered to determine the nature of the criticism. (5) Conclusions were drawn at the end of the discussion of each subhead. These conclusions were reviewed at the close of each chapter with an effort to point out general changes or characteristics. The conclusions of the dissertation restated the conclusions of the several chapters and pointed out major trends and points of greatest significance.

A preliminary chapter and an appendix are added to the body of the dissertation. The preliminary chapter gives a historical survey of the origins of journalistic dramatic criticism in the daily newspaper. For greater completeness, examples of raw data are placed in the appendix.

The conclusions of the dissertation are as follows:

(1) The critics had a wide range of interest: in acting, the critic's major concern, his attention turned principally to the actor's purpose, the conception of the role, the expressive

techniques, and the relation of the actor to other elements of the theatre; in criticism of the purpose of the performance, the critic regarded the commercial, the recreational, and the aesthetic purposes; in the criticism of the written play, the critic discussed primarily the theme, the plot, the characters, the language, the mood, and the literary merits of the work; in dealing with production, the critic judged chiefly the set and costumes and their relation to the actor. (2) Frequent shifts of emphasis occurred as realism was rising or declining and as new forms of play-writing and production appeared. In criticism of acting, the changes followed the critic's idea of the actor's purpose, which was exhibitionary, realistic, or suggestive. The principal changes in critical approval were from the traditional to the original conception of the role, from varied to consistent playing, from an outburst to a restraint of emotional power. New standards of sincerity arose with the development of sympathetic acting. The shift of critical emphasis regarding the purpose of the performance was principally noticed in the effort of the twentieth century critics to regard the drama from the standpoint of its ability to delight and instruct the audience both intellectually and emotionally. This contrasted with the earlier purpose, which demanded a refining influence primarily. In the criticism of the written play, the principal changes of emphasis were the

shift to greater significance in the theme in the twentieth century; the substitution of a standard of dramatic conflict for the earlier criterion of abundant incident and situation; in language, there was a major shift toward more essentially dramatic lines away from burdensome sentiment. In production, new developments of lights and elevations brought out the essentially dramatic situations, and the critics judged productions more often by the new criteria of contrast, balance, harmony, and detachment.

Three trends are observable: (1) increasing judgments of aesthetic standards applicable apart from the theatre, (2) increasing judgments of the essentially dramatic nature of the piece, (3) increasing judgments following the standard--the function of the whole depends upon the functions of the several parts. In general, the criticism is of two types: on the one hand, it is hasty and prejudiced; however, on the other hand, it is at times broad in its point of view and keenly analytical in its method. The majority of examples of the latter type occur in the twentieth century. Both types show conservative tendencies of dramatic criticism as compared with those of the theorist or the experimenter.

INTRODUCTION

Theatre reviews have grown to be a recognized part of the daily newspaper in the larger cities of the United States. In New York, the center of theatrical interest in America, the daily review is considered a powerful tool exerting tremendous influence.¹ Since the daily review is a determining factor in theatrical interests, and since no previous investigation of this important institution has been published, this dissertation purposes to make a historical survey of certain aspects of the review. This survey serves as a first step leading to further examination of the subject.

Two aspects of a journalistic theatrical review are predominant; the review must be at once reportorial and critical. It is reportorial since the event which takes place in the theatre must be described and printed immediately so that the news value is not lost. This time limitation imposes a severe handicap upon the reporter, for the deadlines in the newspaper office occur soon after the final curtain in the theatre. To counteract the haste of the

1. The importance of the theatre review in determining the success of the play is emphasized in Shepard Traube, So You Want to Go into the Theatre (Boston: Little, Brown, 1936), 209-210. Further confirmation of this point of view was made by Garrett Leverton, editor for Samuel French, in conversation, Baton Rouge, March 30, 1939.

first night review, frequent opportunity for more reflective writing is given in a general review which summarizes or prognosticates the season's theatrical activities. These appear in daily papers at the beginning or the close of a season or in a special Saturday evening or Sunday morning edition.

A theatre review is also of a critical nature, for the newspaper readers expect to find a judgment as well as a description of the performance. The importance of the critical nature of the reviewer's task is described by Heywood Brown, the dramatic critic of the New York Daily Tribune.² He writes:

In training and instincts we are reportorial, but just as long as we hold our present job we are going to put the reporter's point of view behind us to the utmost of our ability and stick to the lenses of the critic. The reporter is chiefly concerned with what other persons know and think and feel, while the business of the critic is to tell what he thinks and feels and why. We have a code of beliefs as to what makes a good play. These beliefs are not dogmas, and we do not intend to cling to them if they force us over a considerable period of time into a minority one; neither will we change them because on some particular night an audience is not pleased with what tickles us immensely.

For two reasons we refuse to assume the prophet's mantle. First of all, we would be wrong in more than half our guesses, and secondly, it seems to us that the financial success or failure of a play is not pertinent to criticism.

The reviewer's opinion, being given regularly, slowly reveals his code of belief; these criteria of theatrical

performance can be observed and analyzed. It is the particular purpose of this paper to survey and analyze aspects of this critical element of the daily review. For the uses of this inquiry the critical element shall be termed journalistic dramatic criticism.

The aspects of criticism which will be examined are the range of the critic's interest, the changes of his critical standards, and the nature of his critical remarks. Although a preliminary chapter is included to indicate the early historical development of this journalistic institution, the principal conclusions of the study are based upon a close examination of the criticism in reviews published between 1857 and 1927. This seventy-year period has been chosen for several reasons. In the first place, 1857 is late enough to find regular departments of criticism well established in papers destined to become leading papers in the succeeding years.³ At the same time, 1857 is far enough in advance of the Civil War to give a glimpse of the pre-Civil War theatre. The reason for the final date, 1927, is that it is not too near the present to lose perspective in analysis, yet late enough to include post-World War criticism. In addition, the availability of newspapers was a determining factor.

3. This date is confirmed by Oral Sumner Coad and Edwin Mims in The American Stage, Vol. XIV in The Pageant of America, Liberty Bell ed., XV (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929) 235.

Since a survey of the theatrical reviews in America for a period of seventy years would produce too large a number of reviews to handle, a sampling scheme was used in collecting data for this work. The reviews in the leading New York City papers were selected for study, since that city has long been the center of the theatrical interests of the country. Five of the six leading papers were available, that is, papers which ran throughout the period under consideration, each with a circulation of over 248,000 copies in 1938. The names of these papers with the dates for which they were available are as follows: the New York Herald, which later became the Herald-Tribune, 1857-1927, omitting 1900-1918 except for certain Sunday editions; the New York Evening Post, 1864-1927, omitting 1875-1896; the New York Sun, 1900-1918; The New York Times, 1860-1927, omitting 1901-1909; the New York Tribune, 1857-1924.

Further refinement of the sampling was necessary in order to limit the number of reviews to a workable number. The next step, then, was to select some one month which could be examined approximately every fourth year in the nineteenth century, every third year in the twentieth century, and every year in the last decade under consideration. After reading reviews from various months of the year, November was decided upon as the month containing the greatest number of reviews of "first nights." An

effort was made to examine this selected month in at least three of the five newspapers.

Variations from this sampling were not frequent, but were sometimes necessitated by incomplete files in the newspaper departments of the libraries which were consulted. These libraries were: the Hill Memorial Library in Baton Rouge, the Howard Memorial Library in New Orleans, the Carnegie Public Library and the Pittsburgh Historical Library in Pittsburgh, the Public Library and the Western Reserve Historical Library in Cleveland, and the Public Library in Cincinnati.

Sometimes material was found in other sources than in the newspapers themselves. Direct quotations from the daily papers chosen for this study often appear in George C. D. Odell's Annals of the New York Stage, and a number of theatre reviews are reprinted in The American Theatre: As Seen by Its Critic, a joint work by John Mason Brown and Montrose J. Moses. These direct quotations, like the criticisms taken from newspapers during the preliminary step of sampling various months other than November, have also been used for proof or illustration, since their sources are authoritative.

Much of the data for the preliminary historical chapter was found in the two books by Odell and Brown. These were supplemented by two other studies: one, a book on journalistic dramatic criticism by Charles Harold Gray,

entitled Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795, and the other by Walter Graham, entitled English Literary Periodicals.

Approximately thirteen hundred reviews were consulted in the sampling schemes: five hundred between 1857 and 1900, and eight hundred between 1900 and 1927. From this reading approximately two thousand critical comments were recorded. The collected data were then treated in the following manner: first, groups of quotations bearing on certain elements of the performance were assembled; second, similar or dissimilar standards within each group were noted; third, typical quotations were selected which stated clearly these varying characteristics of critical standards; fourth, the quotations of each group were re-examined to determine the nature of the critical comments.

Detailed conclusions are drawn at the end of each chapter, with the exception of the preliminary, historical chapter, which testify to the range, the emphasis, and the nature of the critical comments found in the single aspect of theatre reviewing analyzed in the chapter. The conclusions of the whole inquiry concern trends which the conclusions of the several chapters reveal.

For the enlightenment of the reader, an appendix of ten selected reviews at least, one from each decade under consideration, has been added. These complete reviews indicate the background from which the critical material used in this paper has been abstracted.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In tracing the origins of journalistic dramatic criticism in England, Charles H. Gray¹ found that mention of the theatres began to appear in the daily journals very early in the eighteenth century, although it was fifty years later before the establishment of regular theatrical comment found its place beside the departments of political, financial, and religious news. Regarding these early journals, Gray writes:

With the establishment of the Daily Courant in 1702 the series of long-run periodicals began. There was set up a medium for regular reports of the contemporary theatres and for critical comments upon the new drama. But the possibilities were not at once seen by those directly concerned with the drama. On the other hand the newspaper publishers seem not to have grasped the possibility of utilizing theatrical news and gossip and criticism for "copy". They were still addressing readers whose main interests were politics and religion. The Daily Courant did print occasionally as advertisements the handbills of the theatre.²

At this time, managerial bickerings and political quarrels leading up to the Licensing Act of 1737 were printed as

1. Charles Harold Gray, Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 39 ff.; cited hereafter as: Gray, Theatrical Criticism.
2. Ibid., 35.

domestic happenings rather than as items of special interest for the theatre-goers.

Gray discovers that three forms of journalistic activity in the early eighteenth century directly or indirectly contributed to the birth of the regular column of dramatic criticism in the daily journal. The first of these was the constant interest which Richard Steele had in the theatre and which he infused into his Tatler³ and Spectator⁴ papers. In the Tatler, Nos. 7, 167, and 182 deal with items of theatrical interest. In the Spectator, which devoted about thirty-five out of its six hundred and thirty-five papers to the theatre or the drama, Nos. 65, 75, 141, 270, 290, and 546 are exemplary.

Steele's interests were continued by such men as the editor of Mist's Weekly Journal. Influenced by the theatrical essays in the Tatler, this editor wrote in No. 223, February 2, 1723, that he believed such material was within the scope of his province; but at the same time he declined to comment on a new play until the profits could be measured so that he would know "the Value of the Ware."⁵ This position was one step nearer to the combined

3. George A. Aitken, ed., The Tatler, 4 vols. (New York: Hadley Mathews, 1899).

4. Alexander Chalmers, ed., British Essayists, 22 vols. (New York: Sargeant and Ward, 1809).

5. Gray, Theatrical Criticism, 62.

reportorial and critical position of the later reviewers than the contemplative and detached position of Steele.

The second form of influence began in the daily periodicals themselves when columns were opened for contributors and correspondents. Many of the letters published in these columns pertained to theatrical affairs, and some contained keen critical remarks.

The third journalistic innovation, which furthered the development of a reading public anxious for theatre news, was the establishment of periodicals devoted wholly or largely to the theatre. The first of these was The Prompter, begun by Aaron Hill in 1734.⁶ It was followed by the Dramatic Censor, the Thespian Magazine and Literary Repository, and the Theatrical Review.

The first daily newspaper to carry a regular department of dramatic criticism was the London Chronicle. This paper was founded in 1757 by Robert Dodsley. The reviewer for this paper became a truer journalistic critic than did the editor of Mist's Weekly. Gray describes the attitude of the Chronicle reviewer by saying that he "...entered so fully into his profession that he recorded impressions of pantomime as faithfully as those of tragedy and comedy, criticising the entertainment according to its own pretensions, not to alien standards."⁷

6. Walter Graham, English Literary Periodicals (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1930), 346. Graham contends that this periodical like Steele's Theatre of 1720 was devoted too much to general interests of the public to be considered a theatrical type.

7. Gray, Theatrical Criticism, 186-7.

At the same time the observant, satirical mind of Goldsmith turned to the affairs of the theatre, and he wrote for newspaper publication. His writing added a higher literary quality to the current theatrical commentary.

In the last part of the century three of the thirteen London newspapers which Gray examined carried regular dramatic criticisms: the St. James Chronicle, the Morning Post, and the Morning Chronicle. These critical reviews were written by George Stevens, Henry Bate, and William Woodfall, men of sufficient literary skill and independence of judgment to be recognized by their own reading public. These reviews contained an analysis of the play from its literary and theatrical merits, discriminating estimates of acting, and impressions of the audience reaction--elements which are found in journalistic dramatic criticism from that time on. The limitations of this criticism are noticeable in the set, conventional attitude with which the material is treated and in the abundance of personal extravagance which intrudes. Causes for these limitations might be found in the prevailing hero-worship of the reigning actors and their families and in the close financial tie which existed between the newspaper and the theatre.

Eighteenth century American journalistic dramatic criticism was influenced by the contemporary dramatic criticism in London, for the close intellectual bond between the States and England was not cut with the severing of political connections. A study of the newspaper reviews

reprinted in George C. D. Odell's Annals of the New York Stage indicates that in New York alone there were five or six writers of theatrical criticism whose comments appeared in the daily papers. As early as 1787 a series of good dramatic reviews appeared in The Daily Advertiser. Two years later The Gazette of the United States printed a series of criticisms, smaller, but of almost equal merit. In the last decade of the century, The Daily Advertiser again emphasized dramatic criticism, and The Commercial Advertiser and Morning Chronicle began similar critical estimates in their columns.

Like their British contemporaries, these reviews showed a modicum of independent judgment, an abundance of conventional comment, and not a little extravagance of personal opinion, particularly regarding the star actors. Unlike the London papers, these were comparatively free from financial control by the theatre.

The standards which these early critics held were noteworthy because they showed signs of the pseudo-classic tendency for elegance and propriety, and at the same time the romantic feelings of enchantment, patriotism, and naturalness. This double standard may be illustrated by reference to three of the reviews of the period. Classic restraint and romantic impulse are felt by Candour, the reviewer for The Daily Advertiser, April 18, 1787, in a review of the early American play, The Contrast. He

writes, "...the sentiments of the play...are the effusions of an honest patriot heart expressed with energy and eloquence."⁸ As this review continues, the reader sees that the critic's neo-classic sense of probability, propriety, and unity of time continues to war with his romantic emotions. In the next year this dual attitude is well illustrated by the writer for The United States Gazette. Writing on September 9, he finds that the romantic sense of patriotism is satisfying the classical dicta of delight and instruction.⁹ In the next decade an anonymous writer of The Commercial Advertiser shows the continuance of this double standard. His review of the romantic, handsome Thomas Cooper in the tragedy of King John on March 5, 1798, concludes: "On the whole, our citizens must be insensible to all that is elegant and enchanting as a spectacle, and all that is excellent and admirable as tragedy, if they neglect his piece."¹⁰

Although the major interest was put on acting, most of the reviews contain brief remarks about the play, mentioning the anticipation in the plot construction or the morals in the lines. Occasionally, too, a general comment is made

8. John Mason Brown and Montrose J. Moses, eds., The American Theatre: as Seen by Its Critics 1752-1934, (New York: Norton, 1934), 22-3; cited hereafter as: Brown, American Theatre.

9. Ibid., 26.

10. George C. D. Odell, Annals of the New York Stage. (to be 22 vols.; 10 vols. completed) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927-1938), II, 14; cited hereafter as: Odell, Annals.

on the scenery. An illustration, taken from The Commercial Advertiser of March 5, 1798, shows the indiscriminating attitude of one reviewer toward this aspect of the production.

A more splendid exhibition of scenery was never witnessed in this city, and probably never in this country; the dresses of the performers were dazzling and well-imagined, and the whole conduct of the stage in the highest degree creditable.¹¹

Further study of the newspaper citations in Odell's Annals indicate that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century the development of new newspapers and the appearance of new critics introduced changes in dramatic criticism. In the first place, the restrained and objective attitude of the eighteenth century reviewers was supplanted by a vigorous series of reviews in the Morning Chronicle and the Evening Post. When each of these papers attacked the actor, John Hodgkinson, a critical war developed over the points of his acting, particularly his faulty expression and his increasing corpulency. This criticism was so pointed that it eventually drove Hodgkinson to Philadelphia.

In the second place, a spirit of irony and a wider range of interest were added to journalistic criticism when Washington Irving published some papers bearing on the theatre in the Morning Chronicle, his brother's paper. Irving used his lash with humor and gentleness as he wrote under the assumed name of Jonathan Oldstyle and later

11. Ibid.

Andrew Quoz. Lastly, critical attacks with a severe sting were published in the Post over the names of Arouet, Thespis, and Dramaticus, and the Morning Chronicle over the name of Minor Critic. The bitter comments which these reviewers made about the inappropriate and shabby sets in the theatre caused William Dunlap, the foremost stage manager of his day, to remodel his entire building and equipment. The energetic nature of the early nineteenth century reviews and the contrast between Irving's genial satire and severity of his contemporaries is illustrated by the following quotations. The first is taken from one of Irving's papers in the Morning Chronicle, dated November 24, 1802.

...the curtain rose--the tress waved in front of the stage and the sea rolled in the rear...a party of village masters and misses...enter but it was cruel of the manager to dress them in buckram as it deprived them entirely of the use of their limbs.¹²

The second, taken from the Post of January 31, 1803, is part of a reply to the review in the Chronicle of the day before.

The above replies, however, only want to be rendered less general to be strictly correct, for certainly Fennel in Iago is too tall,...Hodgkinson again is too fat for harlequins and lovers; according to the poet, "Love hates large, lubberly, fat, clumsy fellows"; and Martin is surely too lean and thin for heroes and assassins.¹³

12. Ibid., 159.

13. Ibid., 167.

In the third place, the criteria of acting held by the reviewers of the Morning Chronicle and the Evening Post, though differing in attitude from their predecessors, continue the late eighteenth century dual standard. A quotation from a review in the Post of October 26, 1809, will show the strong classical tendencies of decorum existing beside the feeling for romantic naturalness. Of Edmund Simpson in the role of Harry Dornton, the reviewer says that he acts:

...with just as much freedom as is perfectly graceful; and as much spirit as is consistent with decorum. His face and figure exactly harmonize with the sentiments he uttered, and indeed with the entire character which he represented.¹⁴

A change in the standards of acting did occur as the burden of reviewing theatrical entertainments passed from the Chronicle and the Post to the new democratic paper, The Columbian. This change was accompanied by the advent of the electrifying actor Maywood. The critic of the Columbian, though continuing the seriousness and the ironic attitude of the reviewers of the first decade, judged the less elevated, but more vivid, acting of Maywood by two new standards. On the one hand, the critic demanded an individual truth to be displayed in the interpretation of the role rather than a general truth, which had been insisted upon heretofore; and on the other hand, he

14. Ibid., 331.

replaced the pseudo-classical standard of good taste with the romantic standard of common sense. Two quotations, taken from a review in the Columbian of January 29, 1819, illustrate each of these innovations.

The Moorish costume, combined with his attitudes, was exceedingly picturesque... it had the effect upon the imagination of a vivid flash of lightning..... In short, we are of the opinion that this style of acting is an acquisition to the American stage--and it is sincerely hoped that it may be instrumental in eradicating a school of performance which is insulting to common sense.¹⁵

These new critical standards are significant because they are the first of a long series that are to show the steady decline of ranting and the rise of a quieter form of vocal and bodily expression.

Another change of standards and attitudes in the journalistic criticism of the first decade of the nineteenth century was that which received approvingly the flood of Kotzebuean sentimental comedies which took the American theatre by storm at this time. Dunlap became enamoured of these pathetic comedies of the late eighteenth century German dramatists and brought them to the American stage as fast as his company could produce them. The pathos in these plays changed the critical attitude so that both audience and reviewers demanded villains whom they could admire and morals that would appeal to all classes. The

15. Ibid., 528.

criteria, developed from reviews of Kotzebue comedies, became an accepted standard applied to all drama. Again The Columbian of January 29, 1819, affords an illustration:

On Monday, a new comedy, altered from Massinger...was got up, and the public are under obligations to Mr. Maywood for introducing a play so replete with moral lessons to almost every class in the community...He performed Luke, who appeared to be a desperate, hypocritical villain, with a pathos that led captive the feelings of the audience, bad as the character was.¹⁶

Even weaker journalistic criticism, showing further influence of the German sentimentalist, appeared in The Columbian of March 13 of the same year: "The invaluable drops that were copiously shed at the Thespian shrine this evening, not only evinced a laudable sensibility, but approved... the performance..."¹⁷

Odell's Annals show that at the close of the first quarter of the century at least four newspapers were printing frequent dramatic reviews. Of these the Post is the most conservative; the National Advocate and the American are full of liberal criticism reflecting both Hazlitt's attitude in London reviews and the popular tendency to draw comparisons between leading actors; the Mirror is developing other new standards, anticipating the second quarter of the century by substituting romantic and sentimental criticism entirely for the partly classical tendencies of the first part of the century.

16. Ibid., 528.

17. Ibid., 531.

The most characteristic criticism of the 1820's is comparative criticism. This is an outgrowth of the theatrical phenomenon which occurred when half a dozen great actors appeared successively on the New York stage within ten or fifteen years of each other. Quotations from the reviews in the National Advocate of October 9, 1821, and the American of October 16 of the same year show how comparative criticism is used as a vehicle for favorable and unfavorable criticism. The reviewer for the Advocate writing about Junius Brutus Booth says:

The character...is not calculated to make a favorable impression....There was nothing of a servile imitation of Kean...though occasionally we had a striking facsimile of that great performer...Kean copied others; others copy Kean.¹⁸

The reviewer for the American expresses his disapproval of the same performance:

...a histrionic plagiary--a close copy of Mr. Kean in all his errors, and as many of his excellencies' as are within his reachI may call Mr. Booth the shadow, and in voice, the echo, of Mr. Kean....But he wants Mr. Kean's fire, and his energy, and his grace....Indeed error of emphasis and of pronunciation were of such common occurrence, that to enumerate them all would be to refer to nine out of ten of all the sentences he delivered.¹⁹

This type of comparative criticism had two developments. In the first place, as new types of acting were being introduced, criticism became more detailed; and, in the second

18. Ibid., III, 12.

19. Ibid.

place, as each new type was pleasurable in itself, apart from the traditional interpretations, the principle of genius began to be recognized.

An illustration of detailed criticism is found in the Post, a paper which had maintained approval of the traditional, chaste manner of acting. As Kean, Kemble, Booth, Macready, and others followed in rapid succession, their acting was analyzed by William Coleman, the editor and dramatic critic for the paper; each part was scrutinized in the light of the traditional interpretation. Writing of Edward Kean on November 30, 1820, Coleman says:

We beg pardon, but if we might make a suggestion to so consummate a judge as Mr. Kean, we would hint that he is deficient in manifesting his anger and disappointment, after his failure to bring Buckingham to his guilty purpose....Some instances of misplaced emphasis we noticed....I think, with submission, see is the emphatic wordBy placing stress on the last word, he insinuates that he has no other horse, instead of directing to select his favorite.²⁰

The principle of genius was the second logical critical outgrowth in the reviews of the new actors of the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. Critics who were trained by experience to believe in a single truthful and accurate interpretation of a role were confronted by a series of different interpretations, each one pleasing in itself and none an exact copy of the traditional technique.

20. Ibid., II, 584.

The only explanation of this occurrence was the romantic conception of individual differences and genius. The National Advocate and the American adopted the term "the true Genius" and employed it widely. These critics found voices pleasing that did not have the traditional "great compass;" they admired movement that was not necessarily "graceful," provided it was manly and imposing; they approved a bearing that denoted "ease" without demanding the more formal carriages that were "stiff" or "stately." Acceptance of the principle of genius led these critics to a consideration of the spirit of the actor, which was another innovation in the whole field of journalistic dramatic criticism. In the National Advocate of September 24, 1823, a sympathetic statement of Cooper's acting, which had received such severe criticism under the less romantic attitude of the earlier nineteenth century reviewers, shows the critic to be aware of the actor's spirit: "There is also a mellowness which corresponds with the ripened years and mature experience of Mr. Cooper."²¹

Observation of the newspaper reviews quoted by Odell shows that the radical dramatic reviews of the time were written in Woodworth's paper the Mirror. Throughout the third decade of the nineteenth century, these reviews reported melodramas and farces in addition to comedies and tragedies. The emphasis of the critic was often turned

21. Ibid., III, 92.

toward the tender, the pretty, the bewitching, or the fascinating. The first review of Miss Lydia Kelly is an ample illustration of the influence of melodramatic standards on criticism. On January 29, 1825, the critic of the Mirror writes approvingly of her:

We have never before seen any one at all like her--and if she leaves us, we may never see any one again. There is a fascinating intelligence in her manner--a peculiar music in every tone of her voice....Without any visible effort, she exactly touches the chord of our feelings....But...her success is the result of artful genius....She seems as some enchantress, just from the land of genius, and bearing around with her all her treasures of music, and dignity, and high passion, and playful grace.²²

The melodramatic reaction was sought by the critic of the Mirror when he witnessed tragedy just as it had been in the lighter forms of drama. In a review of the acting of Mrs. Mary Ann Duff, written on June 24, 1826, he speaks of her as "an ornament to her profession" and continues:

No one could witness the wonderful performances of this actress, and feel his blood burn or curdle, and his soul swayed by the magic power of her eye and voice, without being more fully convinced, than he ever was before, of the extent of woman's power to stimulate or control the emotions of his heart.²³

The reviews in the Mirror apply these same melodramatic standards of pulchritude and fascination to the spectacular aspects of the theatrical performance. A quotation from the review of September 1, 1824, gives an example of such criticism of scenery and costumes: "The Cataract of the Ganges owes

22. Ibid., 147.

23. Ibid., 210.

its principal attraction to the scenery, dresses, &c.--
It is, indeed, a succession of splendid and gorgeous scenes,
which beam upon the dazzled eye with almost a magical effect."²⁴

One beneficial standard resulting from this wave of decadent romanticism was a closer study of nature in interpreting the role. On July 1, 1826, the critic of the Mirror analyzes Mr. Edwin Forrest's attack on his part. He finds it highly original and accounts for this in the method of study which Forrest used.

We perceive in Mr. Forrest something more than the mere student of elocution, servilely copying some favourite star of the day; it is evident that he looks to nature for models, and his own genius for instruction.²⁵

On December 15, 1827, another analysis of Forrest's method by the Mirror critic produced one of the most noteworthy bits of criticism found in this decade:

In Mr. Forrest's playing, we rarely see a violation of that kind of consistency which painters term keeping. His idea of whatever character he personates, seems always to be formed from a close and accurate survey of the whole part; and however the appearance, language, and manners of the assumed being may vary in the progress of the play he still appears before us the same individual, and only changed in so far as he is acted upon by new modifications of circumstance. This we consider a great meritBy this unity he gives an individuality to the part he assumes, by its own peculiar attributes, accurately conceived and forcibly delineated, from first to last.²⁶

24. Ibid., 137.

25. Ibid., 197.

26. Ibid., 355.

Generally speaking, there is no criticism of drama in the New York newspapers of the late thirties and early forties. During this time Odell quotes principally from weekly periodicals. The newspaper criticism which appears occasionally does little more than testify to the decline of the legitimate theatre. An expression of this state of affairs appeared in The New York Herald for April 1, 1841.

We are in the midst of a most singular movement connected with the sentiment, philosophy, finance and morals of theatricals in the United States. The highest order of the legitimate drama is down--dead and buried apparently forty fathoms deep, without any prospect of resurrection either in this world or the other. Tragedy and comedy of the first water have, as if by mutual consent, suffocated each other; and the taste of the educated and intelligent classes have merged into music of the very highest order, and an occasional patronage of the opera.²⁷

The next year the reviewer of the Herald in the issue for August 27 says the same thing in a more epigrammatic way. Writing of Celine Celeste, he says, "We never saw real pathos and peanuts so mixed up before."²⁸

As the middle of the century approaches, two aspects of journalistic theatre criticism deserve attention in this brief consideration. The first of these is that in 1844 the Herald established a department of dramatic criticism which was to replace the conventional descriptive reviews and "puffs" which it had been publishing up to this time.

27. Ibid., IV, 458.

28. Ibid., 625.

The writer of this regular series of criticism expressed his opinions vigorously. At first his attack was discreet when he scorned the mediocre acting of the company then playing at the Park Theatre; later, the standards of his criticism lowered. However, the regularity of his reviews and the vigor of his attitude remained and had a far reaching influence.

The second aspect of theatre criticism in the late forties which deserves comment is the high level of criticism found in the Broadway Journal and the Courier Enquirer, which are quoted by Odell and reprinted in Brown's anthology. The dramatic reviews of both of these journals have been attributed to their editors. Edgar Allan Poe signed those in the Broadway Journal, and Richard Grant White's judgment is recognized in the unsigned ones of the Courier Enquirer.

Consideration of those in the Broadway Journal shows that Poe wrote with virulence and sharp analysis. He wrote as though the duties of the dramatic critic were reportorial, interpretative, and judicial. Of George Vandenhoff's production of Antigone, he writes on April 9, 1845, that it was "ridiculous and pretentious." On June 14 of the same year, he criticized severely Mrs. Anna Mowatt's comedy, Fashion; however, he was aware of its dramatic significance, whereas contemporary reviews in other papers saw only the social success of Mrs. Mowatt's debut. The contrast of two quotations shows the superiority of Poe's criticism. The first, taken from Poe's journal of March 29, 1845, reads:

....The day has at length arrived when men demand rationalities in place of conventionalities. It will no longer do to copy, even with absolute accuracy, the whole tone of even so ingenious and really spirited a thing as the School for Scandal. It was comparatively good in its day, but it would be positively bad at the present day, and imitations of it are inadmissible at any day.

Bearing in mind the spirit of these observations, we may say that Fashion is theatrical but not dramatic. It is a pretty well-arranged selection from the usual routine of stage characters, and stage manoeuvres, but there is not one particle of any nature beyond greenroom nature, about it. No such events ever happened in fact, or ever could happen, as happen in Fashion. Nor are we quarrelling, now, with the mere exaggeration of character or incident;--were this all, the play, although bad as comedy might be good as farce, of which the exaggeration of possible incongruities is the chief element. Our fault-finding is on the score of deficiency in verisimilitude--in natural art--that is to say, in art based in the natural laws of man's heart and understanding.²⁹

The second is taken from the Herald, June 14, 1845.

She went through the first few scenes... with admirable composure, and with such measures of spirit and grace as at once relieved the anxieties of her friends, and created throughout the house a feeling of satisfaction which sought frequent expression in the most flattering and encouraging manner.³⁰

In a more conservative and contemplative manner the Courier Enquirer points out the weakness of Forrest's acting in a review written March 30, 1847. He uses a standard of criticism as high as that of the Mirror critic twenty years earlier, but with a more exacting power of observation. The following quotation shows that he considered the duty of the dramatic critic to be interpretative,

29. Brown, American Theatre, 59.

30. Odell, Annals, V, 103.

judicial, and descriptive.

Forrest now seems to us a "robustious," violent actor, with a musical voice, but wanting taste in the management of it, and in his whole style rough, unrefined, heavy, and laborious. He has great excellencies, it is true, but he does not temper his passion with artist-like forethought, and hence fails in the most essential particular of good acting....A high conception of the part was wanting....so gross and merely natural as to be altogether out of the plane of art....An actor has not to make death real by exaggerating all the dreadful particulars. He is to die to convey an idea. It is not the dissolution that is to be shown, but the emotion; the physical agency is the means, not the end.³¹

The influence of this significant criticism was only indirect. The Broadway Journal and the Courier Enquirer did not establish regular departments of theatrical comment. Nevertheless, those papers which did maintain such departments were encouraged to publish the most judicious dramatic criticism of which their writers were capable.

This rapid survey brings the history of journalistic dramatic criticism to the year 1857. Regular departments for such criticism have been established in the Post and the Herald. These two papers are to be supplemented by similar columns in the New York Daily Tribune and The New York Times and the New York Sun. Other daily papers have also carried on the tradition of journalistic dramatic criticism, but they do not fall within the limits of this discussion because of their small circulation or the dates of their publication.

31. Ibid., 261.

It has now been pointed out that the dual attitude of the eighteenth century, which contained both pseudo-classical and romantic tendencies, was carried on in the first half of the nineteenth century. The pseudo-classical aspects declined into a minute criticism which became superficial in its failure to see the underlying essentials. The romantic aspects allowed themselves to be turned into the channels of melodrama until their critical standards were lost in absurdity. An impressionistic attitude on the part of the reviewer accompanied this change.

The attention of the critic has been mostly on the art of acting, though the elements of production have been gaining prominence. As writers of distinction turned their efforts to dramatic criticism, the function of the dramatic critic in the daily newspaper began to clarify itself, and from this beginning later critics develop steadily the task of being reporter and critic in one.

CHAPTER II

CRITICISM OF THE ACTING

A study of the critical element in the theatre reviews between 1857 and 1927 shows that criticism was applied mainly to four elements of the performance. These four elements form the bases of the remaining chapters of this dissertation. Chief among these is acting, particularly the actor's expressive techniques and his concept of the part. Since these two elements are controlled by the critic's idea of the actor's purpose, consideration will be given to this aspect first. Finally, criticism in related problems such as the actor's equipment and his relationship to other elements of the theatre will be analyzed. The analysis in each aspect of the performance will be made from three points of view: the range, the emphasis, and the nature of the criticism.

1. Criticism of the Actor's Purpose

Though this element of purpose did not elicit much critical comment; still, a number of critics characterized the actor's intentions, and thereby revealed their point of view. A definite change of emphasis accompanies these considerations of the actor's purpose: the oldest group of critics thought that expression on the stage was primarily

a display of the actor's talents; a middle group felt that an accurate imitation of life was the goal for the actor; and recent critics believed that acting should suggest the truth and by the suggestion create an illusion that would give the audience greater intellectual and emotional experiences than the more realistic method could do.

There is no strict line that can separate these schools of thought chronologically, for adherents to one point of view appear almost at the height of predominance of another point of view. However, the points of greatest emphasis do appear successively and can be considered separately.

The first group to be examined is that which contends that display of talent is the purpose of the actor. To this group the play is no more than a vehicle for "testing the mettle of the acting man." Two quotations from reviews of the nineteenth century serve to show the extent and nature of this critical opinion as it was applied to an actor on an opening night.¹ In an issue of the Herald for September 2, 1863, the anonymous reviewer says of John McCullough in the role of Narcisse: "...he surprised us by the display of talents heretofore obscured by his Forrestian proclivities." The second illustration comes from the same newspaper, though written November 9, 1877. Again the reviewer is unknown,

1. For further reference: Herald, April 6, 1858 (Odell, VII, 24); Herald, October 4, 1862; Herald, March 29, 1864; Tribune, February 2, 1886; Post, November 6, 1906.

but the similarity of opinion to that found in the earlier quotation supports the belief that it is the same reviewer still at work. Of Mme. Fanny Janauschek's Lady Macbeth, which he had described as "tragically grand and impressive," he says: "Lady Macbeth was one of the finest histrionic displays witnessed in this city for many years and deservedly won a cordial recognition from a refined and critical assemblage."²

The critics who supported this exhibitionary type of acting evidenced at the same time a high level of criticism, one that was objective and detailed.³ They developed standards of smoothness of acting, climactic progression, and polish, which are of lesser significance in an age of greater realism or impressionistic criticism. Two brief comments will testify to the worthiness of this type of criticism. The reviewer of the Post writes of Adelaide Neilson's finished Juliet on November 19, 1872, saying:

From the most delicious tenderness she passes to the delineation of the most tragic passion without a hint of the artificiality of the transition...Every word, every look, every movement was a picture. Her great personal beauty, was so wonderfully suited to the moonlight which falls upon her face...

The Herald for October 21, 1870, speaks in detail of this performance of Adrienne Lecouvreur: "But Adrienne filled the stage--rising from scene to scene and act to act, in

2. Odell, Annals, IX, 72.

3. For further reference: Herald, November 26, 1864; Herald, February 7, 1865; Herald, November 19, 1872 (Odell IX, 256); Tribune, November 27, 1884; Herald, November 14, 1888.

fervor, grace and force.⁴

A review presumably written by William Winter, the dramatic critic of the Tribune, on November 24, 1896, demonstrates the transition between this earlier standard of exhibition of skill and the later critical position which judged the actor's purpose by his intention of putting on the stage a picture of life. At this time the critic looks for an exhibition of "ideal nature."⁵ Winter writes:

The concentrated intellectual power of the actor was, however, exhibited in a marvelous manner, and with innumerable fine touches the dramatic-artist delineated a true picture of human nature and a terrific image of grisly wickedness and of hopeless misery.

Soon after this the twentieth century began, and with its beginning came the greatest critical approval of life-like representations upon the stage. The height of this movement is expressed in the review of James Huneker, writing in the Sun on November 1, 1903.⁶ He believes that the acting of Nat Goodwin wisely purposes to be life-like: "He is the most natural actor of this generation, the most human. That is why his impact upon the public consciousness is immediate. He always seems to be the character he enacts."

Criticism of the realistic school of acting covers

4. Odell, Annals, IX, 256.

5. For further reference: Tribune, August 21, 1866; Herald, January 6, 1870 (Odell, VIII, 568); Herald, November 2, 1884; Tribune, November 14, 1884; Herald, November 27, 1884; Herald, November 14, 1888; Post, November 16, 1915.

6. For further reference: Tribune, March 30, 1880; Tribune, November 9, 1906; Times, November 2, 1924.

such an extent of time that the changes within this school of thought deserve closer examination. On the whole, the realistic critic professed belief in a close imitation of life on the stage. However, in the nineteenth century, the connotation of realism was predominantly a realism of the emotions;⁷ and in the twentieth century, realism of action was demanded. Two quotations testify to this nineteenth century critical tendency. The unknown reviewer of the Herald, October 21, 1870, writes of Mme. Seebach:

But it was in the terrible poison scene and death climax of the fifth act that Mme. Seebach won a transcendental triumph that none who beheld it can fail to recall through their lives hereafter...It was no longer acting; it was nature, touching, subduing, heart rending, terrible in beauty and agony.

The second quotation is a brief comment in the Tribune of February 9, 1888, which in spite of its brevity, continues the critical attitude of the earlier review. Of Edwin Booth in the role of Lear, the review, presumably written by William Winter, reports: "The reality of this performance is almost agonizing in its pathos. He does not endeavor to present a colossal phantom of misery, such as exists in the undefined imagination of many Shakespearian critics."

Whereas the realism of these nineteenth century performances intended to affect the emotions of the audience

7. For further reference: Post, November 22, 1864; Tribune, July 14, 1865; Tribune, October 2, 1866; Tribune, April 20, 1882; Herald, November 27, 1884.

directly, the realism of the twentieth century actors, on the other hand, won critical approval when it tried to affect the emotions indirectly through the intellect and the imagination. The standard of successful realism which is held by the reviewer of the Herald in November 12, 1921, is one wherein the realism is more intellectual and imaginative.⁸ He contends that imitation of the simple, daily acts makes a poignant statement of the feeling. This review was written for an early play of Eugene O'Neill, The Straw: "Miss Margalo Gillmore gave a beautifully sincere and natural performance of the suffering heroine, simple, unaffected and keenly intelligent."

J. Ranken Towse, for many years the dramatic critic of the Post, usually dissented from the rather general critical approval of realistic acting. In 1903, at the time when Huneker was writing the most all-embracing acceptance of this representational purpose of acting, Towse wrote in his column on November 18 of William Gillette's Crichton:

Whether the rigidity of form and feature be the result of artistic restraint or lack of emotional inspiration need not now be discussed, but it certainly militates against the expression of any humor except that of the dry unconscious, saturnine kind.

8. For further reference: Tribune, March 30, 1920; Times, November 29, 1884; Tribune, November 20, 1892; Tribune, November 10, 1903; Tribune, November 9, 1906; Post, November 6, 1912; Tribune, October 20, 1915; Times, November 27, 1927.

In the third decade of the twentieth century, the voice of Towse still opposes acting which purports to reproduce life as it is. In a review, November 11, 1924, of M. Genier, leader of the company of players from the Odeon in Paris, Towse writes of the limitations of his acting: "His easy good humored naturalism is admirable in the quieter scenes, but he fails to suggest the underlying passion that enables him to slaughter Falkland."

By the time that Towse saw the emotional limitations of realism in the acting of the French player, contemporary journalistic critics began to discover other weaknesses in realistic acting. The demand for a highly selective realism, amounting almost to symbolism, was rapidly spreading in critical circles. This is the new standard of which Lawrence Reamer writes in the Sun on November 28, 1915:

"But life is not the stage, and without artistic exaggeration there can be no effectiveness in the medium of the theatre."

A complete divorce from the demands of photographic realism gives Brooks Atkinson an opportunity to approve the fantasy and unreal symbolism of Max Reinhardt's production, A Midsummer Night's Dream.⁹ He writes in his review on November 18, 1927, in the Times: "The acting is not in harmony merely but in melody. Without players versatile

9. For further reference: Sun, November 1, 1903; Tribune, October 19, 1915; Tribune, January 25, 1918; Post, November 10, 1918; Times, November 2, 1924; Post, November 8, 1927; Times, November 13, 1927; Times, November 27, 1927.

enough to lose all sense of reality, this production could never swim so far from photographic drama."

A review of the criticism of the actor's purpose shows that a standard of (1) exhibitionary acting was replaced by (2) representational acting, which was in turn made into a standard of (3) presentational acting wherein life was suggested rather than copied. Exhibitionary acting developed an objective and detailed criticism, which was definite and analytical. Realistic acting covered such a wide range of time that the interpretation of its critical terminology changes. In the nineteenth century, realism connoted a direct emotional imitation; later, the imitation of the emotion became indirect and realism meant a direct copy of the acts resulting from emotion; finally, the direct appeal of representational acting was more indirect by selection of action, and the meaning of realism changed again. Throughout these changes the realistic actor purported to give the audience an emotional experience. The recent group of critics who believe in high selection, and even suggestion, believe also that this newest type of acting aims to give the audience a more poignant emotional experience than can be had from either the exhibitionary or the realistic schools. The nature of the criticism in the recent group of critics is less impressionistic than that of the critics who favored

the realistic actor. In place of these subjective standards, the late critics have substituted objective, aesthetic principles which are applicable to other than theatrical arts, and they have returned criticism to its earlier objectivity and analysis.

2. Criticism of the Actor's Conception of the Role

The emphasis of the critic's attention of the actor's conception of the part changes with the turn of the century and with the changes of the actor's purpose. Throughout the period under consideration, the critic judges the appropriateness of the interpretation according to six different tests. He asks of the interpretation of the role (1) whether it meets with the traditional interpretation; or (2) whether it diverges from what has been done before; or (3) whether it is faithful to the author's ideal; or (4) whether it is true to nature as he (the critic) knows nature in the abstract; (5) or whether it meets the demands of the critic's sociological and psychological experiences; or, in some cases, (6) whether it achieves a purely aesthetic nature. Although there is no high correlation of criticism of purpose and criticism of the actor's concept, in general the first two points were most often used as criteria by critics who believed in the exhibitionary school; the third, fourth, and fifth points in general cover the long period of realism; the last point is usually made by critics who hold to the school of thought

of suggestive and expressionistic acting.

Examples of reviews wherein the critic has adhered strictly to the traditional interpretation of the part as a standard of correctness appear primarily in the nineteenth century reviews of Shakespearian plays. The prevalence of this type of criticism can be estimated by the three reviews of the same performance of Twelfth Night played on November 18, 1884.¹⁰ The critic of the Tribune, presumably William Winter, writes that Henry Irving's Malvolio is "not so blindly self-conceited as theatrical custom made him..." and the unknown reviewer of the Herald finds that Irving's was the "first embodiment of this eccentric since Gilbert that has made him a human being." In writing an opinion of Miss Ellen Terry's conception of Viola, the unknown critic of the Times also used the traditional standard. He writes:

Her conception of the character, as may be imagined, is not founded altogether upon tradition, although she has accepted what pleases her of the old, and subjected it to her own admirable methods.

In other reviews the opposite standard is at work, the point of view which found appropriateness primarily in originality. A strong and clear example of this is found in the issue of the Herald for November 14, 1877.¹¹

10. For further reference: Herald, February 23, 1858; Times, November 22, 1865; Times, November 20, 1872; Tribune, November 3, 1880; Tribune, November 14, 1884; Herald, November 27, 1884; Post, November 6, 1906; Post, November 16, 1915; Post, November 8, 1921; Herald, November, 22, 1921.

11. For further reference: Post, November 2, 1906; Tribune, October 7, 1884; Post, November 18, 1924.

There the anonymous critic says of the hero of The Lady of Lyons:

The personation was ambitious, original and intellectual, and we think one of the strongest evidences of its merit is the fact that Bulwer would have thought it a failure...But that his Claude was not the sentimental, traditional, beautiful monster of the stage, may the gods give us joy!

Criticism which tested appropriateness of the actor's conception by its adherence to the author's ideal was found in reviews of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the month of November, 1860, the unknown reviewer of the Herald applies this criterion twice.¹² On the twenty-sixth he writes of Watts Phillips' Dead Heart with a terminology differing in connotation from that used in the twentieth century:

In this drama the author evidently intends that the most powerful effect shall be produced in the most natural, colloquial and easy way... Mr. Conway's rendering of the part should be reformed altogether. It may be doubted whether this play in best hands would succeed with out audiences. It is too sombre; and, not to put too fine a point upon it, dreary... after it is all over, cui bono?

Four days later the review in the Herald reads: "Mr. Forrest's Othello is a strong, full earnest performance, realizing the author's meaning according to the plain reading of the text." In 1924 three critics apply this test to three different plays again within the same month. On

12. For further reference: Tribune, September 25, 1866; Tribune, November 12, 1866 (Odell, VIII, 157); Tribune, November 28, 1866; Tribune, November 9, 1909.

November 1, John Anderson, in reviewing the openings of the week in the Post, says of Miss Ethel Barrymore in The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, "...she seems to fail in grasping the true significance and character of Pinero's dramatic argument." A week later Percy Hammond of the Tribune thought that Miss Marilyn Miller's dancing was done "...too well for the gentle adventurer of Mr. Barrie's fantasy." After this comment he adds ironically, "...you doubted she had read the author's instructions to the players." On the twentieth Mr. Towse writes in a review in the Post to say that the clowning of the actors in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme violated the method and environment intended by the author. Three years later another example occurs which shows a more complete interpretation of this standard on the part of the critic. Mr. Anderson, in a review in the Post for November 28, 1927, finds occasion to hold up beside the test of truth to the author's ideal the test of adherence to his artistry as well. He writes of the Abbey Players: "They have the wit and wisdom to leave the characters as they are so variously written, without straining for type consistency or elaborate theory of interpretation."

The criticism of the late nineteenth century judges interpretations according to an indefinite standard of naturalness, called the "ideal." This criterion was fully described in the early part of William Dean Howells' essay

on Realism and the American Novel, in which he uses a grasshopper, which he calls his "ideal grasshopper," made of popular conceptions of field grasshoppers, to compare with the actual insect.¹³ A series of comments taken from the reviews under consideration show this tendency in journalistic criticism.¹⁴ The first one comes from the Herald of April 5, 1872; of Clara Morris in Article 47, the unknown reviewer says:

The mad scene in the fourth act was terribly real in its intensity, and no school, Delsarte or other wise, could give such a startling naturalness to insanity as it received from Miss Morris. Her death scene was touching in the extreme. The varying phases of revenge, madness, jealousy and love...were given with unusual power and distinctness.

The second quotation in the series showing the development of realism which grew into ideal rather than natural criteria is taken from the Times of November 28, 1876.

It reads:

The scathing irony, the dread earnestness and the deep and touching pathos of the character are pointed with a realism which is the actor's own, and which, in our day, at least, is hardly likely to find a more forcible exposition.

The third quotation shows the development of this tendency, for the word "ideal" is employed in the criticism. It is

13. William Dean Howells, "Realism and the American Novel." in American Critical Essays, Nineteenth And Twentieth Centuries, The World's Classics, 354 (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 139-140.

14. For further reference: Herald, January 6, 1870; Herald, January 14, 1871; Tribune, April 27, 1880; Tribune, November 14, 1884; Tribune, November 27, 1884; Tribune, November 2, 1892; Sun, November 15, 1903.

taken from the Tribune of April 5, 1880, and reads: "Mr. W. F. Owen acted Dogberry, and though his humor was a little hard, his personation was right in ideal..." Other phrases from the Tribune such as "an ideal spirit" and "the ideal...cannot be separated from the execution" show the continuation of this critical terminology.

The critics of the twentieth century are the only ones, according to the collected data, who test the actor's concept of his part by the inner demands of the part, environmentally, psychically, or aesthetically.¹⁵ The first occurrence of criticism which seemed to search the nature of the part for the accuracy of the interpretation is in a review by James Huneker in the Sun for November 1, 1903. Here Mr. Huneker, though bound by traditional criticism and limited by an epigrammatical style, seems to sense the inner demands of the role. He writes of Nat Goodwin: "His Bottom is not so witty, so finely self-conscious as was the rôle in the hands of the late James Lewis. It is more brutish, and, therefore, more Bottom-ish."

An opinion in a review by Mr. Towse in the Post for November 14, 1906, is an example of the growing twentieth century tendency to examine the player's interpretation of the role sociologically--by the inner demands of the role as the critic sees them through his own experience apart

15. This idea is given further elaboration by Norman Foerster, American Criticism: a Study in Literary Theory from Poe to the Present (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 223; cited hereafter as Foerster, American Criticism.

from the theatre.¹⁶ Mr. Towse feels that Nazimova's Hedda Gabler does not suit her environment. He says:

From the Ibsenian or indeed almost any other point of view, Mme. Nazimova's interpretation of Hedda was as wrong as wrong could be...a bit of feline and voluptuous Orientalism, utterly inconceivable as a product of the chill atmosphere of Christiania.

This same production of Hedda Gabler brought forth from the pen of John Corbin, then the critic of the Sun, a statement that shows the increasing interest in the psychological truth of the character and aesthetic demands of the actor's interpretation.¹⁷ He wrote: "With Hedda's sickness of body and spirit pounded in from the start, there was little scope for salience, variety and surprise as the character developed in action." In John Anderson's review of Ethel Barrymore as Paula Tanqueray, there is another statement which illustrates the psychological criterion. He says on November 1, 1924, in the Post, that she "...misses the psychic values." Without employing the technical vocabulary of Mr. Anderson, Mr. Atkinson reviews John Barrymore's role of John in a play by that name with the same critical standard. In a review dated November 5, 1927, in the Times, he writes: "Acted from

16. For further reference: Sun, November 1, 1903; Tribune, November 9, 1906; Post, November 16, 1906; Tribune, November 23, 1909; Post, November 26, 1912; Post, November 9, 1915; Times, November 11, 1921; Herald-Tribune, November 9, 1927.

17. For further reference: Tribune, November 20, 1921; Herald, November 22, 1921; Times, November 25, 1923; Times, November 12, 1924; Times, November 18, 1924; Post, November 9, 1927.

the inside, with something of majesty in the tempo, John becomes a commanding spiritual figure."

The comments of Stark Young, the reviewer for the Times in 1924, give the best examples of the aesthetic criteria which the twentieth century critics use in judging the actor's interpretation. On November 2 he is aware of a play which evades "...its essential character and school." On the eighteenth he praises Gemier, the French actor: "...his Shylock stayed with great competence within the frame of the play. We may congratulate Monsieur Gemier and say that he really did not distort the pattern of 'The Merchant of Venice!'" And finally on the thirtieth, he finds Miss Pauline Lord playing so accurately that she does "...not change or violate the part..."

These quotations show that many critics have given attention to the actor's conception of the part and that the emphasis of their criticism has shifted from (1) the traditional view (2) to the test of the author's intention and (3) to the test of the inner nature of the part according to its sociological, psychological, or aesthetic truth. These changes are partly, at least, due to the large number of new plays that are provided for the stage in the twentieth century but also to the growing tendency on the part of critics to analyze the truth of the performance by their own experience of life apart from the theatre.

3. Criticism of the Actor's Expressive Techniques

A study of the actor's skill in translating to the audience his ideas and feelings will be called for the purpose of this paper a study of his expressive techniques. This term will include (1) the intellectual and (2) the emotional habits of the actor as well as (3) his physical skills of speaking and moving.

Regarding the intellectual habits of the actor in detail, we may say that the critical emphasis in the newspaper reviews between 1857 and 1927 concerned itself chiefly with the matter of selection as it applied to variety or consistency in acting. In consideration of emotional expression, criticism demanded that such expression carry with it (a) sincerity or conviction and (b) spirit or intensity. Of the physical skills, criticism concerned itself with matters of (a) voice, (b) posture, and (c) movement.

Since all of these elements are closely linked to the actor's purpose, the succeeding comment on the extent, emphasis, and nature of the criticism of the expressive techniques will be considered in connection with the critic's attitude toward the exhibitionary, the realistic, or the suggestive schools of acting.

Intellectual--A closer inquiry into the matter of criticism of the intellectual habits of the actor reveals the actor's choice of (1) variety for the sake of interest

or (2) consistency for the sake of clear, unified characterization.

Soon after the middle of the nineteenth century, when the burden of critical points of view favored the exhibitionary type of acting, the emphasis of criticism was definitely on variety and versatility in the art of acting. This meant variety, not for artistic reasons, but variety for its own sake. Odell makes the statement that the year "1874 was evidently lunatic,--even frenetic [*sic*]--in its craving for 'Variety'."¹⁸ Several quotations from this era show how this popular idol of variety invaded critical circles.¹⁹ One aspect is mentioned in the review in the Herald for September 26, 1871. Of Charlotte Cushman the unknown reviewer says: "But it was in the dying scene...that we like her most. The nature of the scene required no violent exertions, and gave full scope for the display of the highest art." Variety of emotional expression is mentioned again; this time by the unknown reviewer in the Times on November 28, 1876, in a review of Edwin Booth's acting. He writes: "His intensity of passion and his power of sudden transition from one extreme of emotion to the other have full scope in a drama the climax of which is terrible beyond parallel."

18. Odell, Annals, IX, 412.

19. For further reference: Herald, August 22, 1861 (Odell, VII, 321); Herald, October 20, 1874 (Odell, IX, 550); Times, November 28, 1916; Times, November 3, 1892; Times, November 8, 1892; Post, November 27, 1900; Sun, November 27, 1900; Sun, November 18, 1906; Tribune, November 20, 1906; Post, November 21, 1906.

As early as March 11, 1858, the Tribune had foreshadowed this criterion in writing of James H. Hackett: "If he repeat a passage under an encore he so varies it as to give it a new painting."

As criticism turned from approval of the display of talent to a type of acting which purported to present on the stage a close imitation of life, clear and consistent acting began to replace this emphasis on variety. In 1880 in an unsigned review, Winter praises Dion Boucicault simply for not lapsing out of his part. However, in the next decade Winter's criticism becomes more significant in detail and more definite in its new point of view. On November 24, 1896, he praised a performance of As You Like It for being, "...clear in purpose, firm and fine in execution, and so easily flexible and fluent as always to seem unstudied and spontaneous..." In another review the criterion of consistency emerges even more clearly.²⁰ On this occasion Winter is criticizing The Gay Lord Quex in the Tribune of November 13, 1900. He says: "...it was acted with remarkably symmetrical fusion of diversified talent."

As the first decade of the twentieth century progressed, and as realism became a closer imitation of actual life, the interest which should exist equally between variety and consistency swung further and further from the nineteenth

20. For further reference: Post, November 13, 1900; Post, November 18, 1909; Post, November 12, 1912.

century stress on variety. On November 18, 1903, Mr. Towse of the Post, though he disliked the school of acting to which William Gillette belonged, saw in his role of the Admirable Crichton a great deal of dramatic value because Gillette "...preserved a nice consistency..." in translating the character from the script to the audience. In the same year, James Huneker, writing for the Sun on November 15, praises Forbes-Robertson for his avoidance of the popular "mosaic interpretation" of Hamlet which was putting together all the bits of previous performances. Instead, he finds that Forbes-Robertson kept strictly to a single point of view.²¹

In 1924 Stark Young, a critic who sees more value in selective realism, tries to establish a critical standard which will restore the balance between the nineteenth and early twentieth century points of view. In the Times of November 2, 1924, Young sees variety introduced into the acting of Mme. Simone in her technical invention, but unity maintained in the part because of her emotional and intellectual concentration. On the eleventh he applies the same balanced point of view to the acting of M. Gemier, who was playing in repertoire. He says: "We shall have to see him in a number of parts to appreciate justly the variety and originality that have made him one of the leading figures in the continental theatre." Stark Young

21. For further reference: Post, November 19, 1921; Times, November 20, 1923.

implies by this remark a steady consistency in the acting of one piece; whereas the versatility of the actor is to be seen in a series of roles.²²

The nature of this criticism of the intellectual skill in choosing between variety for interest and consistency for clarity shows a change between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The most definite contrast, however, lies in the reviews of Winter and Young. Each of these tried to restore a balanced, middle point of view. However, Winter tried to see an ideal fusion of the two aspects of variety and consistency, and Young saw in the aspects of technical invention and in the opportunities for repertory acting the means of creating variety and interest without giving injury to the necessary unity of thought and character development. The judgment of Young deals with the function of the parts in their relation to the function of the whole; and his criticism bears a greater relation to the general principles of art apart from the particular limits of the theatre.

Emotion--The emotional habits, which formed part of the actor's expressive techniques, were analyzed as well as the intellectual habit. This analysis is of particular interest because of the critical changes in judgment of the actor's sincerity and spirit. In the nineteenth century the exhibitionary school of acting made

22. For further reference: Times, November 4, 1924.

sincerity a matter of minor importance. At that time the actor did not demand that the audience enter subjectively into the spirit of the play; it was enough if they admired his talents objectively. Consequently, no estimates of sincerity or conviction were made by the critic.

However, at the end of this century, as realism gained importance, the attitude of the actor became a matter deserving comment. William Winter, of the Tribune, reviewed The Disreputable Mr. Reagan on November 2, 1892, in the light of the new standard. He writes: "The imitation carried no authority or conviction, but stopped short simply at the denouement of adroitness and sincerity."

Though high seriousness is an essentially worthwhile critical test to apply to acting, in the late nineteenth century this standard was very much limited because the sincerity of the actor was praised without seeing it in proper relation to dramatic effectiveness.²³ An example of this limited critical standard is exhibited on November 22, 1892, when Winter writes in his column in the Tribune:

Mr. Willard, like the few other actors who are striving to do great things and sometimes showing superb powers, must find his content in the consciousness of noble achievement...His career has been one of high ambition, perfect dignity, and steadfast devotion to a noble ideal.

There is a striking relationship between this critical

23. For further reference: Tribune, November 22, 1892; Post, November 2, 1915; Post, November 8, 1921.

point of view and that of the earlier decade which believed in variety as an end in itself.

In the twentieth century, sincerity became more important. Since realism showed actual life on the stage as it is on the streets, and as the spectators saw figures on the stage with whom they wanted to identify themselves and their neighbors, sincere acting was demanded by the critics. This type of acting was termed by the critics "sympathetic." Huneker of the Sun points out in an issue of the paper for November 12, 1903, the tie between sincerity and sympathetic acting. In this comment, Mr. Huneker shows at the same time the weakness in the complete approval which the audience at large has given to this standard of acting:

The playwright spoke of Mr. Byron's splendid "sincerity," just the quality that makes the work of this talented and earnest young man so sympathetic, and also a quality which often blinds his admirers to the very potent fact that he is prone to play a rôle in one key.

In the same vein, Towse writes in the Post on November 1, 1918, saying of the heroine of Be Calm, Camilla; "She gives the impression of an innocence that is real, not pretended and nothing is much more potent on the stage, especially when allied with charm of person and manner." In a unique, epigrammatic style, Percy Hammond writes of Marilyn Miller's insincere but sympathetic acting in the Herald-Tribune, November 16, 1924:

Miss Miller contributes the needed mustard. She adds lovely legs, a cabaret vocalism, and studied pirouettes to the equipment of Mr. Barrie's eternal child. She catches, as the saying is, the audience coming and going. But, being one of those who are, it seems, already gone, I saw her as just a pretty silhouette.

Also in 1924 Stark Young, who understands the need of sincerity in plays of the realistic school, points out its necessity in revivals and period dramas as well.²⁴ On November 2 he reviews in the Times Ethel Barrymore's acting in The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, saying: "...there is enough power and intense conviction to carry the rôle over these hurdles of the forced and outmoded: she has nothing to fear."

A glance back over the critical comment on the emotional technique of acting as it is involved in sincerity shows some change of connotation with the change of acting schools and the change of the centuries. Sincerity develops with realism, and in recent years it is required in other than realistic drama. The most notable observations, however, lie in the nature of the criticism. Critical weakness appears when sincerity is regarded for its own sake, and stronger judgment appears when sincerity and conviction are viewed in the light of their dramatic effectiveness. This critical demand for sincerity in the theatre seems to be one aspect of American romanticism in general.

24. For further reference: Sun, November 4, 1906; Sun, November 12, 1912; Post, November 20, 1912; Post, November 10, 1915; Post, November 1, 1918.

The survey of the reviews throughout the seventy years under consideration shows that the matter of spirit--spontaneity and intensity--provoked critical judgment as a part of the actor's emotional expression.

In the case of spontaneity, though there is only slight chronological change, the outstanding comment arises from the typically American nature of the criticism. In many cases, spirit is deemed of greater importance if spontaneous and zestful than if studied and restrained. A nineteenth century example of this typically national point of view occurs in the Herald on October 24, 1871. The anonymous review concerns itself with the technique of Mr. E. A. Sothern in the role of Dundreary in Our American Cousin:

No man can see Mr. Sothern play it without falling into convulsions of laughter....Nor can any man of culture fail to admire the wonderful finish and ease and polished care of Mr. Sothern's acting...Sometimes, indeed, there is a faint sense of study²⁵ and effort, but the feeling is fleeting....

Frequent examples of this critical attitude of spirit are found in the Post in the twentieth century.²⁶ On November 14, 1906, Towse writes: "In naturalness and spontaneity Mme. Nazimova...was almost wholly deficient...her impersonation was highly elaborated in striking outline and

25. Odell, Annals, IX, 155.

26. For further references: Herald, November 17, 1857; Tribune, August, 12, 1866 (Odell, VII, 318); Post, November 27, 1900; Sun, November 15, 1903; Post, November 14, 1906; Sun, November 12, 1912.

glaring colors..." Later, on November 6, 1912, Towse draws an even sharper contrast. Writing of William Faversham's production of Julius Caesar, he says: "It is characterized by too much noise and activity, although much of it is commendable in spirit, if not highly finished in art." As late as November 20, 1924, Towse is still of the same opinion. At this time he writes of M. Gemier: "He manifested an intelligence which made Jourdain less credible and less humorous than he really is. His acting was more notable for its elaborate mechanism than for apparent spontaneity."

An actor's spirit which evidenced itself in intensity rather than spontaneity also received critical approval. In the nineteenth century, intensity in the portrayal of passion was a critical requirement.²⁷ One of the early Tribune reviews, dated September 25, 1866, discusses the technique and spirit of the German actor, Bogumil Dawison. "We cannot identify tameness with naturalness." This attitude appears repeatedly throughout the nineteenth century. As late as 1892, it occurs again in another review in the Tribune. On November 22 William Winter writes:

Not since Edwin Booth was in his prime, not since those golden days of Davenport and Wallack and Matilda Heron (days that few people properly appreciated until they were

27. For further reference: Herald, September 18, 1857; Herald, November 13, 1857; Herald, September 26, 1871 (Odell, IX, 142); Tribune, November 2, 1892; Tribune, November 22, 1892; Tribune, November 30, 1912.

gone) has the stage displayed an actor capable of the magnificent outburst and tempest of feeling--natural, lofty, sustained, vehement, and guided with unerring precision, while delivered without the least apparent restraint--with which Mr. Willard closes the third act of "The Middleman."

In the twentieth century, intensity received more critical approval when it was associated with strength, certainty, and poignancy. An illustration of the twentieth century point of view which differs in terminology and connotation from the earlier attitude is found in a review of O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms written by Stark Young for the Times of November 12, 1924.²⁸ It reads: "Mary Morris, the wife...with a new suppressed method that deepened at times into an admirable poignancy and a kind of grim, thin poetry that seemed the exact truth of her lines."

A summary of the elements of the emotional expression of the actor shows that they have elicited serious critical consideration. Sincerity has been considered by those critics who held to the realistic school of acting and seems to be admired as well by the most recent critics. Spontaneity received most praise from Towse of the Post, whose periods of work as dramatic critic correspond most nearly with the rise and fall of the realistic school. The critical use of the term "intensity" has suffered a change of connotation. In the nineteenth century it

28. For further reference: Tribune, November 17, 1884; Sun, November 18, 1906; Herald, November 23, 1921; Times, November 20, 1927.

carried the meaning of outburst of passion; whereas in the twentieth century it is synonymous with suppression of strong feeling.

In regard to the nature of the criticism, it has already been pointed out that this criticism is sometimes weak and limited and at other times broad in its point of view. The American philosophy which has impregnated much literary criticism, making it approve impulse and naturalness, has likewise affected journalistic dramatic criticism. There is a tendency in this aspect of the reviewer's critical estimates to tend toward significant, keenly analytical, and more universal judgments in the twentieth century.

Physical--In addition to the discussion on the intellectual and emotional habits, which are expressive techniques of the actor, theatre reviewers have turned their attention to the physical techniques, vocal and bodily expression. Since judgments of the reviewers show slight changes in emphasis and point of view as the years go by, they deserve comment in this study of theatrical criticism.

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, when the critics viewed acting by an exhibitionary purpose, they gave minute attention to the elements of technique and only general attention to the ends which the technique is to serve. Two quotations will illustrate this critical

tendency as it is found in the reviews being studied.²⁹ The first comes from the Tribune of September 15, 1857, from a review of the younger Charles Mathews' acting:

Instead of facile pantomime, play of expression...he substitutes expression of gesture and play of limb...His movements are pleasure to the eye, quiet yet quick; as perfect as they appear unstudied. His articulation is singular and crisp...it seems unaccountable that he should be able to preserve the points of the dialogue so distinctly...His acting will improve our quality. We have seen plenty, but he is the very artistic incarnation of elegance and refinement.

And the second one comes from the Post of November 28, 1864, from a review of Edwin Booth's Hamlet. According to the critic, this performance was

...even better than his former personations of this difficult character. Every intonation, gesture and expression is the result of such profound and exhaustive study as the true artist bestows upon his work.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth century, a period of transition occurs. During this time, the critic sees the physical techniques of the actor partly as unrelated artistic skills and partly in relation to the end which

29. For further reference: Tribune, September 15, 1857; Herald, November 13, 1857; Tribune, April 2, 1861 (Odell, VII, 318); Post, November 28, 1864; Tribune, October 9, 1865 (Odell, VIII, 18); Tribune, November 12, 1866; Herald, October 19, 1870 (Odell, IX, 72); Herald, January 2, 1877; Tribune, November 6, 1906; Post, November 2, 1915; Post, November 1, 1921; Times, November 11, 1924; Times, November 5, 1927.

they are serving. The first one of these is found in the Tribune of November 14, 1888, in a review by William Winter. He says of Mary Anderson in Winter's Tale:

The conspicuous...and convincing artistic beauty to be...observed...is her realization of the part in figure, face, presence, demeanor and temperament. She does not afflict her auditor with the painful sense of a person struggling upward toward an unattainable identity. She makes you conscious of the presence of a queen.

The second quotation shows an even greater effort to narrow criticism of voice and movement from its general correctness to its specific correctness. This illustration, taken from James Huneker's review of Forbes-Robertson's Hamlet for the Sun on November 15, 1903,³⁰ reads: "He carefully excluded fiddling realism, the little bits of 'business' each one true to its place, but untrue to Hamlet..."

As the twentieth century developed, less and less attention was paid to this aspect of the theatre, for the elements of playwriting and staging became more prominent and the critics believed in a more selected realism. Whenever a critic included critical remarks on the expressive skills, they were concerned with the essential propriety of translating the idea or mood to the audience. An example of these occasional significant remarks on

30. For further reference: Tribune, November 14, 1888; Tribune, November 25, 1900; Sun, November 3, 1903; Sun, November 15, 1903; Sun, November 14, 1906; Tribune, October 21, 1915; Times, November 2, 1915; Tribune, January 7, 1919.

physical expressive techniques is found in a review by Stark Young in the Times of November 4, 1924.³¹ With a clear sense of values and sharp observation, he writes of Mme. Sans-Gêne:

It was pleasant to see again an eighteenth century piece in which the actors knew how to wear their clothes, to walk and talk, to attack their lines, to have the manners supposed to go with the formality of that polished age.

A summary of the remarks on the physical expressive techniques show that at no time have they been completely overlooked by the critic. During the seventy years under consideration, the criticisms show a slight change of emphasis tending constantly to define more clearly the end which the skill is serving.

4. Criticism in Related Points

Up to this point the actor's purpose, concept, and expressive techniques have been discussed. The last part of this chapter deals with several points related to acting which also show the range of critical interest, the changes in critical emphasis, and the nature of journalistic theatrical criticism during the period 1857 to 1927. The most frequently mentioned one of these points is the actor's equipment. Other points are: the relative importance of the actor, the relationship of the star and the company, and the relative importance of genius and training.

31. For further reference: Times, November 7, 1923; Times, November 2, 1924; Post, November 10, 1927; Times, November 29, 1927.

Though most of the frequent comments on the actor's equipment--his voice, body, and personality--are of a descriptive rather than critical nature, the description shows that the relative positions of stage beauty and stage personality have undergone a complete reversal in the point of view of the reviewer.

In the first place, the matter of beauty claimed attention for and in itself in the nineteenth century, but in the twentieth century it became incidental to the idea of the play. Two quotations illustrate this change.³² The first is taken from the Herald of January 5, 1875:

Mrs. Rousby is a young woman of unusual personal attractions. She has a fine spirituelle Marie Stuart face, full eyes, regular features, with a steady unvarying expression of sweetness and interest. We do not know of a face on our stage that can be regarded as more beautiful.³³

The twentieth century attitude of subordination is clearly stated in the review found in the Tribune of January 7, 1919. Of Miss Patricia Collinge, Heywood Broun writes: "She is, as always, lovely to look at, but she acts so delightfully in her present rôle that her fresh fairness seems no more than an incident."

In the second place, the matter of personality was going through a contrasting shift of emphasis; the earlier attitude of losing personality in the part was

32. For further references: Herald, November 13, 1857; Herald, September 22, 1863; Post, November 5, 1864; Times, December 27, 1865; Times, November, 1872; Herald, January 14, 1877; Tribune, November 12, 1888; Herald, November 15, 1888; Tribune, November 24, 1896; Sun, November 2, 1915; Post, November 13, 1918; Herald, November 9, 1921.

33. Odell, Annals, IX, 552.

being replaced by the opposite point of view of maintaining the actor's individuality. In the Herald for October 10, 1857, the reviewer found a "wonderful impersonation" which he admired because it was "divesting the performer of every degree of personality."³⁴ This original opinion was preserved into the early part of the twentieth century.³⁵ For instance, in 1912, Adolph Klauber says disapprovingly of Mrs. Minnie Maddern Fiske in the Times of November 24:

The result has been that this actress, in one rôle after another during the last two or three years has failed to take account of the actual demands of character, preferring to bend it to her own peculiarities of mind and method and manner.

But three years later the Times, in an anonymous review, expresses the opposite point of view and also recognizes this shift of critical emphasis.³⁶ This remark, which appeared on November 23, 1915, regarding a performance of John Drew, reads: "...it can be spoken of slightly only by those who do not recognize good acting unless it be accompanied by a completely disguising characterization." On November 8, 1924, Stark Young published a statement in the Times that shows the perseverance of this opinion:

34. For further reference: Tribune, November 28, 1866 (Odell, VIII, 158); Tribune, January 27, 1880; Herald, November 14, 1888.

35. For further reference: Post, November 27, 1900; Sun, November 15, 1903; Tribune, November 3, 1921.

36. For further reference: Tribune, February 6, 1880; Herald, November 19, 1884; Sun, November 4, 1906; Tribune, November 27, 1906; Post, November 5, 1912; Times, November 5, 1912; Times, November 24, 1912; Post, November 18, 1918; Post, November 22, 1921; Tribune, November 23, 1921; Times, November 7, 1923.

For the cause of acting it did one thing... it provided a steady succession of substitutes in the diverse rôles...[and] helped the habit of disconnecting acting from the actors and seeing better the character of it as art.

This transfer of emphasis and shift of opinion seems logical and explicable when it is considered in the light of the purpose of acting held by the critic. The adherent to the exhibitionary type of acting wanted the additional spectacle of stage beauty; added spectacle seemed to be an end in itself in acting. On the other hand, the follower of the presentational school of acting saw, in the increasing emphasis on the idea of the play, characteristics of the actor's appearance. In regard to personality, the earlier critics were forerunners of the type of acting which was associated with a direct portrayal of the emotions as being nature, truth, the real thing of life. This emotional emphasis led to a destruction of the integrity of the actor. The more artistic criticism of the twentieth century saw the importance of keeping the essential unity, or individuality, of the performer. According to the collected data, the twentieth century critics believe that the actor should present his ideas and feelings through his own personality.

The second point related to acting which critics found occasion to comment upon is the actor's relation to the play. A steady stream of comments gleaned from reviews

throughout the period under consideration testify to the importance of acting over all the other elements of the theatre, principally over the play. This attitude is illustrated in this statement of Winter in the Tribune of November 6, 1906, which reads:

It is a comfort to see an actor who, whatever may be his defects, squarely places the emphasis on Acting, and does not seek to attract attention by ministering to an ephemeral taste for fads and follies.

Observation of this series of comments shows two points of view. The majority of critics feel that a poor play can be elevated artistically and given theatrical effectiveness by a good actor, while the minority opinion says that it is useless for a good actor to waste talents on a poor script. A brief survey of these critical expressions testifies to their frequency and their critical nature. For instance, in 1877 a good actor made a bad play "consistent;" in 1892 an indefinite play became "definite;" in 1906 "significance" was added by the acting; in 1915 the prolix and poetic play, The Eternal Magdalene, was given "dignity" by the actress; in 1921 the needed "vitality" was added by the players; and in 1924 a play was given "character" on the stage.³⁷ However, the attitude reverses itself in a few instances. In 1906, 1912, 1927, quotations are found that express the attitude which

37. For further reference: Times, November 27, 1923.

Atkinson typifies in the Times of November 15, 1927, when he says of Helen Hayes in Coquette, "Her mobile, vibrant style of acting seems this time to be recklessly squandered on a shabbily theatrical drama."

These comments do not show a chronological change, but they do represent a difference in majority and minority opinion as to the relation of the actor to the play. The minority opinion represents the critical position which makes higher artistic demands; it sees the value of the whole as dependent upon the value of the separate parts.

The interest in the next point which critics raised regarding related points of acting, the star's relation to the company, shows a chronological change. The earlier quotations regarding this relationship show that the critic expected to find a difference between the importance and value of the playing of the star and of that of the other members of the company. The approval which the critic of the Herald gives to the acting of McCullough on September 22, 1863, demonstrates this point of view.³⁸ In the review he says, "Or [sic] does he play so as not to detract from the Great Forrest?" The later quotations express the opposite point of view, one that expects a lesser difference between the leads and the other actors. A remark made by an unknown critic of the Times for September 25, 1901,

38. For further reference: Tribune, September 15, 1857.

will serve to illustrate the opinion of the recent critics.³⁹

The fact that Mrs. Fiske's name stands in large type at the head of the house programme has no significance, as far as the drama is concerned. It is a play which demands for its interpretation a good company, and this--wonderful to say--has been provided.

Within this criticism, one can see that at this time the opinion of the critic regarding the level of ability of the various players differs from that of the program maker, and was probably in advance of public opinion.

The nature of the recent critical position is unlike the earlier position because it shows concern over the value of the whole as it is related to the value of the parts.

The last point to be discussed here as a matter of critical concern relating to acting is the reversal of emphasis which occurs in the numerous comments on the value of genius and the value of training.

Two quotations from reviews of the nineteenth century show that these reviewers believed genius to be more important than training.⁴⁰ The most able statement of this view is given in the Tribune of July 14, 1865. William Winter, then a very young critic, is probably responsible for its writing.

39. For further reference: Tribune, November 8, 1892; Sun, November 5, 1912; Times, November 5, 1912; Post, November 6, 1912; Times, November 6, 1912; Times, November 12, 1912; Times, November 4, 1924; Post, November 11, 1924; Post, November 29, 1924; Post, November 22, 1927.

40. For further reference: Herald, September 8, 1857; Times, November 10, 1868; Tribune, October 26, 1865 (Odell, VIII, 32); Tribune, April 18, 1882; Times, November 16, 1884; Herald, November 14, 1888; Times, November 8, 1892; Tribune, November 27, 1900.

Though the towering and lurid genius of Edmund Kean has not descended to his son, and though that son's career has been marked by no wild outbreaks of passionate eccentricity, yet Charles Kean has genius of his own, original, powerful and admirable--a capacity of divine influence that lifts him far above the level of cultured mediocrity.⁴¹

Though there is approval of Dawison's training in the quotation taken from the Tribune of September 25, 1866, there is also a frigid attitude between the lines. Of this German actor, the reviewer says: "Law prevails with him...He trusts nothing to impulse...The result is--a consistent, evenly sculptured embodiment of character, beautifully symmetrical, but cold as marble."

The change of emphasis in the latter part of the period under consideration is shown in two quotations which place training on a more important plane.⁴² The first quotation, taken from the Times of November 30, 1915, demonstrates the shift of emphasis on the value of training and also a difference in critical attitude. This unknown reviewer says of Marjorie Rambeau: "She has had a training precious few of her contemporaries can boast, and the complete skill of her performance is a joy to behold."

This opinion and attitude toward training lifts it above genius in the eyes of the twentieth century

41. Odell, Annals, VIII, 30.

42. For further reference: Tribune, September 20, 1866; Herald, October 24, 1871 (Odell, IX, 143); Post, November 23, 1906; Tribune, November 5, 1912; Post, November 1912; Sun, November 7, 1916; Tribune, January 7, 1919; Times, November 11, 1921; Post, November 19, 1921; Herald, November 24, 1921; Times, November 4, 1923.

critics. It further illustrates the more detailed and analytical criticism which for the most part characterizes the more recent critics. In a review of the weeks' openings, Towse writes in the Post of November 19, 1921:

But we have a few mature actors who had the advantage of some early training in them [Shakespearian plays], and these are always conspicuous...for their neatness, precision, and vitality, the general authoritativeness of their work, and especially by their superior resourcefulness in diverse methods of expression.

Summarizing the criticism found in these four matters related to acting--the actor's equipment, his relation to the play, to the rest of his company, and the value of his genius and his training--one sees that there have been some shifts of opinion between the nineteenth and twentieth century and that the nature of the criticism changed in the twentieth century. The discussion of the actor's equipment showed that a reversal of position took place in criticism of physique and personality. In the cases of the actor's relation to the play and to the rest of the company, the shift of critical emphasis shows the subordination of the player to the performance as a whole. In the last point, training is finding renewed emphasis in the second and third decade of the twentieth century criticism.

In conclusion, the criticism of acting shows a wide range of critical interest. There has been consideration in the theatre reviews of the actor's purpose, of his conception of the role, of his expressive techniques, and

of related points such as the actor's equipment and his relation to other aspects of the theatre.

These various considerations have shown changes of emphasis that correspond to the changes of the actor's purpose and to the change of centuries. Although realistic acting which purposed to imitate life on the stage was predominant in receiving critical approval, a type of exhibitionary acting, which purposed to display the actor's talent, preceded this major school; and a type of suggestive acting has succeeded it.

Six different types of criticism of the actor's conception of his role have been pointed out. These show a historical development and some relation, too, to the changes in the actor's purpose.

In the consideration of the criticism of the three expressive techniques--intellectual, emotional and physical,--there have been chronological changes which correlate for the most part with the purpose of the actor. Criticism of the actor's selective ability, his principal intellectual expressive technique, showed that in the nineteenth century the actor who favored variety rather than consistency won critical approval for his choice. In the twentieth century a more balanced critical point of view praised an equilibrium of variety and consistency. Three kinds of emotional expressive techniques received considerable critical comment and showed a change of attitude on the part of the critic between the

nineteenth and twentieth century. In the first place, appreciation of sincerity grew with the realistic type of acting and later spread to the suggestive and expressionistic type as well. Criticism of spontaneity and intensity, which are other aspects of the actor's emotional expressive techniques, also changed with time. The latter particularly changed the meaning of the word from outburst of spirit to suppression of spirit as the realistic school rose and fell in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century. In matters of related significance to acting, such as the actor's equipment and his relationship with other members of the company or with the play, further changes in critical emphasis are noticeable. A curious contrasting shift took place in the criticism of the actor's physique and personality. Whereas the nineteenth century critics praised physique as an end in itself and wanted personality lost in the role, the twentieth century critics regarded physical beauty as incidental and wanted the actor's personality to remain whole throughout the performance. Particularly in the twentieth century the critics estimated the value of the members of the company other than the star and expected their part of the acting to be on a high level of achievement. Throughout both centuries the acting has been considered of greater importance than any other element of the theatre.

The nature of this criticism is both limited and

of wide application. The twentieth century places more stress on the function of the whole as dependent upon the function of the several parts and the necessity of maintaining the dramatic values of both the whole and the part. Several times the criticism became local and national rather than universal, but, on the other hand, the point of view occasionally rose to universality.

CHAPTER III

CRITICISM OF THE PURPOSE OF THE PERFORMANCE

The third part of this discussion of journalistic dramatic criticism deals with the reviewer's attitude toward the purpose of the performance.

It must be admitted, in the first place, that the theatre about which the New York journalistic critics were writing was for the most part a commercial enterprise. However, except for very few instances, the critics evaluate it as a recreational or an artistic institution in writing their reviews.

These exceptional instances will be called commercial criticism. They are considered here because they demonstrate one of the most definite changes in point of view that occurs in this period according to the collected data. The accepted point of view from the Civil War to the World War was that the box office limited the artistry of the performance and distorted the judgment of the actors. Two examples of this point of view show the attitude of the critic in dealing with commercial criticism.¹ In the Tribune on December 9,

1. For further reference: Herald, October 1, 1899; Sun, November 7, 1915; Herald, September 21, 1863; Post, November 5, 1921.

1872, this statement appears in a review of the weeks' activities: "Certain things that are done, it is true, appear to be done wholly and entirely for the sake of making money and these, accordingly remove themselves from the province of thoughtful consideration." In the Times on November 24, 1912, Adolph Klauber writes, "...monetary returns, which, when all is said and done, is [sic] the final measure of success with these achievements, no matter how artistic they may be."

Even Sarah Bernhardt and Coquelin were criticized by the Sun on November 28, 1900, for their mercenary interests. The unknown reviewer says: "...nothing but the quest of American dollars could have induced these illustrious players to enter upon this joint enterprise... It gives no scope for such an achievement as people look for in a great artist."

A difference of values and attitudes began to occur in 1918. In a review in the Tribune, January 20, J. Alex Pierce expresses his agreement with Kenneth MacGowan, who is quoted as saying that the reviewers show a lack of understanding of the commercial factor in the theatre. Pierce then says: "There is no excuse from the economic law of demand and supply, cause and effect. The American public gets exactly the sort of fare it can appreciate."

This recognition of the underlying principle of the American theatre began a new point of view in the reviews that mentioned the economic as well as the artistic function

of the performance. In a general review in the Saturday issue of the Post, November 12, 1921, Mr. Towse writes as though he saw the dual goal: "But even the box office standard need not, and does not always and necessarily, imply an appeal to the primitive and somewhat infantile tastes of the masses." Another instance of the harmony of ends which replaced the former antagonism is found in a review of The Miracle, written by Stark Young for the Times, November 9, 1924: "That such a colossal venture could be chanced and made to prosper is significant comment on the resources and possibilities of our theatre public."

The attitude which viewed the theatre as a place of mere idle recreation should be pointed out next. It can be seen that a few of the nineteenth century reviewers expressed this view, which has generally been recognized as typically American because of (1) the opposition which the theatre received from Puritan New England and (2) the abundance of wealth and leisure which suddenly burst upon the nineteenth century theatre-goers. This point of view maintains that the theatre's main purpose is for relaxation. It is quaintly stated in two reviews:² one, the Times for November 3, 1896, finds the theatre a place where the hard-working American can "...rest his thinking apparatus for a couple of hours;" the other, the Herald of November

2. For further reference: Herald, November 13, 1857; Tribune, February 10, 1872.

2, 1857, contains the same American spirit and even the American idiom in saying that the theatre is a place "... to pass an idle hour...[or] to get in out of the rain'." This attitude, though interesting and popular, did not receive continued, serious approval from the reviewers under consideration.

However, there is a steady effort on the part of the critics to evaluate plays by the classical, aesthetic standard of profit and delight.³ Until the twentieth century was well under way, the balance of emphasis swung easily and rapidly between these two elements of the aesthetic purpose of the theatre. The more recent reviews show a steady, well-balanced standard of values that is used for reviewing all kinds of theatrical entertainment without distortion.

In the nineteenth century the pendulum of critical emphasis swung too far toward delight when the farces and melodramas of the third quarter of the century were under review. A report of a performance that appeared in the Herald of September 5, 1863, shows this unbalanced point of view.

To see four or five ghosts in a single night in the same theatre is no common treat. Yet this is the style of entertainment offered every evening at the

3. This standard has prevailed since the days of Horace, for the criterion first appeared in his Epistle to the Pisos. The wording is taken from line 477 of the translation by Ben Jonson, reprinted in Great Critics, James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks, editors, (New York: Norton, 1932).

New Bowery. It is no wonder such an overpowering programme...attracts tremendous audiences...

A less melodramatic performance was reviewed in the Times of November 24, 1868, but the attitude of the reviewer shows the leniency of critical standards in this age even more certainly than did the quotation from the Herald.⁴ Of The Fairy Circle and An Hour in Seville, the unknown reviewer of the Times writes:

These pieces are as familiar to a certain class of playgoers as Shakespeare is to another class, and are no doubt as much relished as the best works of the Swan would be. They furnish, at all events, an innocent and wholly amusing entertainment, and for this reason are not to be scorned...No one can sit through the present performance without being on a constant grin; and as this is a laughing age, the entertainment commends itself to the generation.

In an effort to counteract this criticism of the "laughing age," William Winter of the Tribune carries the emphasis of his criticism of the purpose of the theatre too far in the opposite direction toward spiritual profit.⁵ On March 31, 1880, in an anonymous article, he tries to make clear his position by saying:

4. For further reference: Herald, January 30, 1866; Herald, February 21, 1872 (Odell, IX, 168); Times, November 20, 1876; Times, November 26, 1892; Tribune, November 24, 1896; Post, November 29, 1921; Times, November 8, 1922.

5. For further reference: Times, November 19, 1872; Herald, January 2, 1877; Tribune, March 31, 1880; Tribune, April 18, 1882; Times, October 14, 1884; Tribune, November 13, 1888; Herald, November 29, 1891; Tribune, November 15, 1892; Tribune, November 10, 1896; Times, September 25, 1901; Times, November 4, 1912; Times, November 24, 1912; Sun, November 14, 1915.

If it be the justification of the stage, as an institution of great public benefit and social advancement, that it elevates humanity, by presenting noble ideals of human nature and making them examples and guides, that most desirable idea is practically and splendidly presented in this beautiful performance.

The nature of Mr. Winter's criticism is worthy, for he recognizes the dangers involved when a work of art pretends to be merely an "elaborated precept" or a "reformatory measure" and when it steps beyond the limits of its technique. Of a performance of Richelieu, he writes without signature on April 18, 1882, "...the chief thought which it prompts is of spiritual experience more than dramatic art." The weakness of this point of view lies in the writer's lack of discrimination between the functions of intellect and emotion in giving delight or profit.⁶

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Towse, of the Post, recognizes the dual goal of profit and delight in theatrical performances; but he continues to regard the intellectual and emotional experiences of the theatre as a dichotomy.⁷ The illustration, taken from a review

6. Elaboration of the idea of "Spiritual idealism" as a type of American criticism is found in Foerster, American Criticism, xiv.

7. For further reference: Herald, November 23, 1858 (Odell, VII, 109); Tribune, November 28, 1866 (Odell, VIII, 146); Times, November 10, 1868; Herald, January 2, 1877; Tribune, October 14, 1884; Times, September 25, 1901; Sun, November 25, 1906; Post, November 27, 1906; Times, November 5, 1912; Sun, November 12, 1912; Tribune, November 20, 1912; Sun, November 14, 1915; Post, November 21, 1918; Times, November 11, 1919; Times, November 22, 1921; Times, November 18, 1923; Post, November 22, 1924; Herald-Tribune, November 13, 1927.

of Divorce which appeared on November 20, 1909, shows Towse criticizing from this wide-spread point of view:

[It is]...sure of an audience in France, where the stage is the organized arena of dialectics but...not likely to prove widely attractive on the English speaking stage unless of a deeply emotional and sympathetic character.

A recent critical position contends that the dual goal of profit and delight is both intellectual and emotional. A comparison of Winter's analysis of the catharsis which he experienced at a performance of Othello with the broader and more understanding analysis of the same response made by Percy Hammond in 1927 will show the difference in the nineteenth and twentieth century points of view of theatre reviewers.⁸ Winter associates tragedy with only the higher, uplifting intellectual levels rather than with the intellectual-emotional experience that gives both delight and profit. In his review of Othello on November 13, 1888, he concludes:

It is an open question whether any considerable number of persons are benefited by seeing a performance of "Othello"...You leave...with mingled emotions of consternation, disgust and grief. You feel as if you had seen a murder and attended a funeral.

On the other hand, Percy Hammond writes of Desire Under the Elms in the Herald-Tribune of November 12, 1924,

8. For further reference: Times, November 14, 1888; Tribune, November 25, 1896; Tribune, November 6, 1906; Post, November 12, 1921; Times, November 3, 1924; Times, November 9, 1924; Herald-Tribune, November 23, 1927.

with a more balanced understanding of the response to tragedy, one which recognizes the dual goal, profit and delight as a united emotional and intellectual response.

He says:

So alarming an interpretation of Nature is it that even the most hardened of Mr. O'Neill's disciples last night shuddered at its honest terrors and were subdued...Mr. O'Neill's dramas always make me glad that I am not one of the characters involved...it provides inspiration for unhappy playgoers to forget such woes as may pester them...I leave his theaters with a song on my lips, congratulating myself that my glooms are insignificant.

This well integrated aesthetic purpose, one that is applicable to many forms of theatrical production, is given a wider interpretation by Stark Young in an article that appeared in the Times, November 9, 1924, in a review of the week of theatrical events. Of The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, he writes:

It illustrates, not proves, that great art has busied itself with fundamentals, with essences, attributes, basic conceptions, illustrating them, if you like, with particular instances, plot situations, characters, details, but not proving subdivisions of these. Art does not prove, but experiences. Its business is a vaster logic, to amplify, dilate, fructify and increase the abundance and unity of life.

From the discussion of part three, the reader may conclude that journalistic criticism of the purpose of the performance has often appeared through the seventy years under consideration and has changed its emphasis

in three directions during this time. In the first place, the commercial and aesthetic attitudes have ceased to oppose each other sharply. In the second place, it seems that a greater seriousness of purpose has replaced the earlier view that the theatre was for idle recreation alone. In the last place, the recent criticism applies to the criterion of a more balanced, well analyzed purpose to the performances under review. This purpose arises from an integration of intellectual and emotional experiences of a pleasurable and profitable nature. The nature of this criticism is at times narrow and superficial, but at other times broad in scope, true in point of view, significant, and universal.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICISM OF THE WRITTEN PLAY

Whereas acting criticism is based upon the critic's idea of the actor's purpose, criticism of the written play is not so related to the playwright's purpose. Often in the nineteenth century the play was judged solely as an acting vehicle. More recently the significance and dramatic value of the theme, plot, characters, language, and mood have received critical judgment. A close analysis of these separate parts will increase the understanding of the critic's view of the play as a whole and its function in the theatrical performance.

A large number of quotations in both centuries show that it has always been the habit of the reviewer to comment on the theme of the play. Observation of the comments will show how the standard of the critic changed in demanding themes of greater significance or of a certain moral import.

1. Criticism of Theme

At first, the critic found it sufficient to state

the idea of the play without expressing his judgment on it.¹ Often in the nineteenth century this meant relating the whole story in the review. One of the earliest steps in advance of this, toward a higher type of criticism, was the characterization of the story. On the one hand, there were themes that were old and were merely approved with the critic's phrase, "tried and true;" on the other hand, there were themes that were new, or psychological, or significant, which also were reported with the reviewer's approval.

The comments of a truly critical nature seem to deal with both the intrinsic merit of the theme and its moral nature. Criticism of the intrinsic merit of the theme begins as early as March 7, 1882, when the Tribune judged a play as weak because it was not sufficiently set apart from "...all these fractious tumults and transitory fevers of the popular spleen." Although this type of criticism concerns a point that is essential dramatically and artistically, it is not frequent in the nineteenth century.

Much more criticism of the value of the theme appears in the twentieth century. The cause of this

1. See the Appendix, example No. 1 for a whole review of this type.

increase might be found in the nature and the frequency of the new plays which were being produced. Three examples of twentieth century criticism show a continuation of the best criticism of the nineteenth century in this regard.

In a review in the Times of November 3, 1912, Klauber believes that significance of theme was more important than originality; he writes: "The mere fact that its basic idea is not essentially novel does not militate against its importance." In the issue of the same paper dated November 17, 1915, an unknown reviewer judges by the same standard as that which William Winter presumably had used in 1882. It is quoted here as an illustration of the increasing emphasis on the intrinsic merit of the theme.²

Of Bjornson's play, When the Young Vine Blooms, this reviewer says: "...it is both alien and transitory in significance."

This same idea is expressed with greater detail in a still later review from the Times. On November 1, 1927, Brooks Atkinson writes:

Being a poet at heart, Mr. Santayana has always believed steadfastly in the divinity of madness. But Mr. Ousler's excursion into this perilous theme merely touches the surfaces with its disdainful horror of the Philistines.

2. For further reference: Herald, January 14, 1877; Post, November 12, 1903; Sun, November 18, 1909; Times, November 3, 1912; Times, November 3, 1918; Times, November 17, 1918; Tribune, January 7, 1919; Times, November 11, 1919; Times, November 15, 1921; Herald, November 20, 1921; Times, November 8, 1922; Times, November 11, 1923; Post, November 14, 1924; Times, November 30, 1924; Times, November 8, 1927; Times, November 29, 1927.

Criticism of the moral nature of the main theme and of the minor points is more abundant in the collected data than judgments of the theme's significance. Furthermore, these comments on moral aspect show a great change in emphasis throughout the period of study.

The majority of critical expressions in the reviews collected from the nineteenth century favor morals and refining elements in the plays of that period. A strict, but quaint, position appears in a review in the Post, November 1, 1864:

Mortimer did the part as well as such a thing could be done, but the possibilities of vulgarity which the text contained were too pointedly and too noisily appreciated by certain persons in the audience to make the innocent country visitors who might have been in the house feel quite at ease. We put it mildly.

As late as November 13, 1900, Winter, one of the strong defenders of the refining influence of the drama, reviews The Gay Lord Quex from the strict moral point of view.³

"If the bed is not there for any purpose...[It is] infringing on the public sense of propriety, not to say decency..."

Three new points of view arose in the reviews of the twentieth century. One of these is introduced by Winter himself, for in 1906 he refers to the ethics of the

3. For further reference: Tribune, January 20, 1880; Tribune, March 30, 1880; Times, November 18, 1884; Times, November 22, 1888; Times, November 15, 1892; Times, November 10, 1896; Post, November 12, 1921; Post, November 16, 1921. See also Appendix No. 5.

play rather than the more limited subject of morals.⁴ On November 20, 1906, he writes: "The ethics of Mr. Mitchell's play are shallow and trivial." Other critics substitute similar terms having wide connotations such as "motive power" and "moral force."

The second twentieth century tendency in criticism of the moral element of the play was to recognize the dramatic ineffectiveness of preachment and propaganda. This began to appear in 1909 in the reviews of Alexander Woolcott. Of Divorce, he writes on November 20 in the Tribune: "The play is a preachment...therefore, comes forward under a disadvantage; it has to advocate something..." In the gay and vigorous language of Percy Hammond, the same objection to moral and propagandizing fare is stated.⁵ Writing of The Fanatics in the Herald-Tribune of November 14, 1927, he says:

But the Fanatics' persistent tub-thumping on behalf of birth-control, more freedom among the genders and other conventional devices of reform grow irksome as the play proceeds, and we yearn for more scenes like that in which the chorus girl and the hero are caught romancing in an attic.

The third new critical tendency is to recognize "stock moralities" in the theatre. This John Corbin has

4. For further reference: Sun, November 26, 1906; Tribune, November 18, 1909; Times, November 12, 1915; Post, November 12, 1921; Times, November 9, 1924.

5. For further reference: Times, November 12, 1884; Sun, November 25, 1906; Tribune, January 7, 1919.

done in the Times, for November 10, 1918, wherein he simply says that he is "not unmindful" of them.⁶

A summary of the comments found in the reviews regarding the theme of the play shows that early in the nineteenth century a change took place when these comments became critical rather than simply descriptive. These critical comments tended to become increasingly more aware of the significance of the theme. In addition to this, the critical use of the term "moral" came to have a wider connotation in the twentieth century.

2. Criticism of Plot

Another element of the play which fell under the judgment of the journalistic critic was the plot. Much of this comment has likewise been descriptive in nature, but, from the criticism involved, the rise and fall of the Sardou cult can be seen and evaluated and the critical attitude toward action, probability, and originality can be estimated.

Plot Structure--A sense of compact play form was beginning to enter critical circles in 1867 when a picturesque judgment of a theatrical piece, Daly's Under the Gaslight, appeared in the Herald of August 8:

6. For further reference: Times, November 14, 1922; Times, November 11, 1923; Times, November 18, 1923; Post, November 11, 1924; Post, November 18, 1924.

This summary of the plot is certainly as clear, and possibly more so, than the plot itself. The piece is, in fact, nothing more than a stage carpenter's drama. The play has been fitted to the scenes as the poetry in old annals used to be to the plates, or just as Nicholas Nickleby's drama was adapted to bring in the pump and two water tubs which Mr. Vincent Crummles had bought at a bargain...Of the drama itself, however nothing good can be said.⁷

In contrast to this, the detailed analysis of the fine points of dramatic construction which Towse found in Sardou's Madame Sans-Gêne shows a change in critical attitude, emphasis, and point of view. On November 4, 1924, he writes in the Post of the "deftness of mechanism," "the neatness of dovetailing," "the smoothness and rapidity of movement," and the "general theatrical effectiveness" of the play. Admiration of the French form of playwriting had been growing steadily since the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁸

Soon after this review of Madame Sans-Gêne, however, an attack on this standard of playwriting appeared in the Times. Brooks Atkinson, on November 6, 1927, saw limitations imposed by this particular form of dramatic construction and states his definite antagonism to it.⁹ He does this

7. Odell, Annals, VIII, 313.

8. For further reference: Tribune, September 18, 1872; Tribune, February 2, 1880; Post, November 9, 1900; Post November 13, 1900; Sun, November 18, 1909; Post, November 26, 1912; Tribune, October 22, 1915; Tribune, January 19, 1918; Tribune, January 25, 1918; Post, November 3, 1921.

9. For further reference: Sun, November 19, 1912; Times, November 1, 1918; Herald, November 23, 1921; Times, November 14, 1924; Times, November 5, 1927; Herald-Tribune, November 20, 1927.

in a review of John Galsworthy's Escape by quoting an essay of Galsworthy, Some Platitudes Concerning Drama, written in 1909. Mr. Atkinson then says:

Those were the days when the well-built play was hastily confused with the noblest handiwork of God. Curiously enough, "Escape" adorns the principles laid down in that trade essay without being in the least a well-built play...

And he continues by a quotation from Mr. Galsworthy's essay which reads: "A human being is the best plot there is."

Action--Three developments are discernible in the collected data regarding criticism of the action in the plot. In the first place, critics of the nineteenth century often gave attention to the abundance of incident and situation. The majority of these comments on incident do not contain serious critical consideration, for the reviewer who sees a play from the point of view of its situations rather than its progressive development fails to look for the fundamentals. A typical example of this superficial comment is found in the Tribune of November 24, 1868, in a review of The Fairy Circle:¹⁰

Its incident is abundant. Its humor, adventure, and feeling furnish light and shade. Its text is not lacking in good bits. Above all, it blends Irish history and Irish romance. Then too it has less than the usual commonplace of the Irish drama.

10. For further reference: Herald, February 20, 1866; Times, November 20, 1872; Herald, January 14, 1877; Herald, January 23, 1877; Post, November 24, 1903; Post, November 26, 1912.

A second type of criticism of action shows the critic's interest in progressive movement and climax. This type of criticism shows keener analysis and more knowledge of plot essentials than the first type did. An illustration is found in the Tribune of November 20, 1912, in a review of Edward Sheldon's The High Road. It says of the author: "...he has broken away courageously and successfully. His is really an episodic play without plot--in the usual way of the plot--yet the dramatic interest is sustained with cumulative power."¹¹

The third type, an entirely new development of the twentieth century criticism of action, was an increase in the psychological criticism of plot development. The innovation which resulted from this was a wider interest in the conflict about which the drama was built. On November 13, 1900, Towse senses the initial elements of conflict in the dramatic contrast which he finds to comment upon in his review of The Gay Lord Quex, a play about life above stairs and life below stairs. This static conception of conflict changes into a more active conception by 1912. At this time Adolph Klauber is writing in the Times. On November 3, he says of The Blindness of Virtue: "It is a real play in the sense that it presents an actual conflict,

11. For further reference: Tribune, November 19, 1884; Tribune, November 8, 1892; Post, November 13, 1900; Tribune, November 20, 1912; Sun, November 7, 1915; Tribune, January 19, 1918; Tribune, January 25, 1918; Times, November 18, 1923.

though of adolescent youth." In a quotation taken from the Tribune of October 17, 1915, Heywood Brown, the reviewer, uses the word "contrast" which Towse had used in 1900, but he implies by it the dramatic and psychological force of conflict which Klauber recognized in 1912.¹² He writes of The Unchastened Women: "...it is a natural contrast of two women set against each other in a logical clash of interest, and not the artificial contrast of a good woman and a bad woman."

Probability--There are comments in the nineteenth century reviews regarding probability in the plot, but these do not show any trend toward or away from the Aristotelian principle. The word "probability" is bandied about by the nineteenth century journalistic critics quite casually. Three quotations show this untutored critical attitude.¹³ The first comes from the Tribune of March 29, 1858, which reviewed Forrest's role of Rolla in Pizarro. In favor of improbability, it says: "Those who love great melodramatic effect, showered down, often, with a daring disregard of truth, will unite with us in our favorable opinion..." The second, on the other hand, favors the law of probability. It is taken from the Tribune of January 6, 1880, and reads:

12. For further reference: Tribune, November 12, 1892; Post, November 13, 1900; Sun, November 7, 1915; Times, November 13, 1918; Post, November 3, 1921; Times, November 10, 1923.

13. For further reference: Tribune, October 7, 1884; Sun, November 26, 1912; Times, November 6, 1923; Times, November 13, 1923; Post, November 3, 1921.

...[observe] the web of story that is woven beneath its glittering surface, the past actions and experiences which it so clearly implies, the circumstances that are so naturally adjusted around its action, the clear picture of manners which is so unobtrusively made its background, the undeviating respect for probability with which its incidents are invented and marshalled...

The third comes from the dramatic column of the Times for November 8, 1892, and is almost non-committal. It says of The Gilded Fool: "The play, in short, is conventional and highly improbable, but it is uncommonly neat in construction, pretty in sentiment, and mildly agreeable in humor."

Originality--In both old and new criticism some attention has been given to the problem of originality in plot. Several comments from reviews of the 1870's testify to the craving for variety which the popular audience and the critics shared alike. A review in the Times of November 26, 1872, of Round the Clock is typical of this standard. It runs: "...whatever else may be said of it, [It] includes a great deal of variety and that of the sort best liked by the general audience." An occasional demand for originality appears in the nineteenth century, but much greater stress is given to it in the twentieth century. A comment by Lawrence Reamer in the Sun for November 14, 1915, of Henry Arthur Jones' Liars illustrates the changing attitude in this increasing demand. It says: "The declaration of truth by the sincere lover comes like

a breath of fresh air, not only because it is the truth and and therefore a novelty, but because the emotion of Faulkner seems important." A quotation from the Herald of November 23, 1921, testifies to the prevalence of this criterion. Of The Dream Maker the reviewer says: "Then there were, moreover situations of the old fashioned kind that did not fail to have their effect, contemptuous as the attitude of the modern drama may be toward them." This quotation shows not only the stress on originality of the critic's contemporaries, but the reviewer acuity of dramatic values.¹⁴

In summarizing the criticism of the plot of the play, the first thing to be noted is the growing sense of structure throughout the period under consideration; for a sense of organic structure finally replaces the Sardou formula. It should also be noticed that there are three kinds of critical comments of action. The last of these, the new interest in conflict, is an outgrowth of the increasing sense of psychological and true dramatic values. The term "probability," which was used so frequently in the nineteenth century, did not appear so often in the later reviews. Lastly, originality, confused with variety in the nineteenth century, is a stricter demand of the twentieth century critics. However, even in recent papers, approval is given to the conventional incidents of the theatre when they reappear in new plays. The nature of this criticism, though frequently weak and limited in its scope, at times shows a high sense of dramatic and literary values.

3. Criticism of Character.

Theatrical criticism has also concerned itself

14. For further reference: Tribune, February 3, 1880; Post, November 24, 1903; Post, November 6, 1906; Post, November 29, 1918; Times, November 18, 1923; Post, November 1, 1927.

with the function and the nature of the character as the playwright has written it and as the actor has presented it on the stage. Since the majority of critical opinions in the matter are found in the twentieth century, an analysis of these opinions testifies more to the range and nature of the criticism than to the chronological shift of critical emphasis.

The functions of the character have been variously interpreted as being: to show action, to develop sympathetic interest, to present the idea of the play, and to carry the burden of the play.

In the Tribune of October 7, 1884, William Winter, who believed that the character should show action, gives this opinion in a negative criticism. He says: "... characters too often tell their stories, and incidents already shown are subsequently rehearsed." This same idea, that the function of a character is to develop itself in action, is given further elaboration in a review of The Unchastened Woman by Heywood Brown in the Tribune of October 17, 1915.¹⁵ He writes:

The playwright may endow one character with every virtue and burden another with all the most alluring vice, yet if the character is not allowed to show these various qualities in action he is a bad character and dramatically damned.

15. For further reference: Times, November 24, 1912.

In addition to this statement, Broun considers another aspect of the function of the character in the same review. He sees it as endeavoring to arouse sympathetic attention but not sentimental sympathy. He adds:

A critic has said that "The Unchastened Woman" is not a good play, because the audience is left in doubt as to which of the characters is intended to claim its interest. We hold that such an objection is unsound... To demand that a dramatist, particularly one working in the field of realism, should create only characters steeped in amiable vices or virtues is preposterous... We don't know about Becky Sharpe, but we are sure that the devil would despise sympathy. He would extract as the most flattering emotional tribute interest. That is, above every other feeling the emotion which the dramatist should seek for his characters.

The critic of the Times, in a review dated November 19, 1918, analyzes the matter of sympathetic attention further.¹⁶ He reviews Maurice Maeterlinck's Betrothal from a more psychological point of view than did Broun, saying: "Those pale wraiths of varying stature which float about so aimlessly are all too feeble to sway the motions of any heart, to say nothing of the impulses of adolescence.

In a later issue of the Times, November 2, 1924, Stark Young finds a less personal function of character

16. For further reference: Post, October 31, 1864; Tribune, November 12, 1884; Times, November 6, 1912; Herald, November 17, 1921.

in reviewing Luigi Pirandello's Naked.¹⁷ He says approvingly:

Ersilia Drei then is not normal, if you like, but she is not set forth from any morbid interest on Pirandello's part but only in order that this everlasting struggle between fiction and form with reality and flux may be given dramatic exhibition.

The critical view that saw the burden of the play carried by the characters was first expressed by the critic of the tribune on November 20, 1912. Of The High Road he writes:

For this reason Mr. Sheldon has turned a new bend in the mood of American drama. He holds steadfastly to his characters and lets them work out their own play. To do this he has had to break away from the cut and dried form of the continental drama...

Later, this point of view is echoed by Brooks Atkinson in a review of Galsworthy's Escape in an issue of the Times for November 6, 1927.¹⁸ Atkinson states his position by quoting the essay of Galsworthy which says: "...take care of the characters; action and dialogue will take care of themselves..."

Turning to the consideration of the nature of the character, we see that this aspect resolves itself into a threefold category. In the first place, there is critical

17. For further reference: Herald, November 27, 1884; Tribune, November 12, 1921; Post, November 5, 1924.

18. For further reference: Times, November 22, 1888; Sun, November 14, 1915; Times, November 25, 1922.

concern about the historical truth of the character; then comes consideration of the correlation of the nature of the character and human experience; finally, there are criticisms which demand the essential rightness of the character.

The importance of historical accuracy in the minds of some critics and the unimportance of it in other's attitude is illustrated by a sharp contrast of critical opinion. The first one is taken from the Tribune of November 6, 1906, and the second from a review by Percy Hammond in the Tribune of November 11, 1927.¹⁹ The earlier critic writes: "That play is radically false to historical fact, being a muddle of time, place, person, and incidents, and being grossly misrepresentative of the character of King Richard III." The later one writes of Pepys in And So To Bed:

In it the diarist is to be seen with his strange contradictions emphasized--as the hypocrite, the honest man, the gallant, the Puritan, the lion and the poltroon--and if the picture does not resemble that in your mind it will serve as well as any.

Those critics who held to the opinion that character must agree with human experience are in the majority. Though William Winter, presumably the author of this review, is slightly prejudiced toward Shakespeare, his attitude toward character is indicative of this common

¹⁹. For further reference: Herald, January 2, 1877; Tribune, November 12, 1903.

type.²⁰ He writes of Hermione in the Tribune of November 14, 1888, saying: "Such a nature is rare; but it is possible, it exists, and Shakespeare, who depicted everything, has not omitted to portray this."

Some other examples of this attitude toward the nature of character look for its truth in human experience but in a more sociological way.²¹ For example, a review of Undercurrents by William Winter presumably from the eighteenth of the same month states:

The observer of it is impelled to wonder whether such webs of wickedness are indeed woven, in the great cities of the world, and whether such human monsters as the villains of this fabric do, to any extent, prevail; and yet he need not wonder, if he happens to be a close observer of the newspaper record of every day life.

Though in the minority, there are critics who look for the essence of the character to determine its essential nature. These critics test character by the laws of dramatic imagination and by abstract logic of psychological forces. The opinion which Brooks Atkinson quotes in his review of Escape by Galsworthy in the Times of November 19 is a clear example of this attitude toward the nature of the character as presented by the playwright.²² The quo-

20. For further reference: Herald, November 27, 1884; Tribune, November 20, 1912; Tribune, October 21, 1915; Sun, November 14, 1915; Times, November 10, 1918; Tribune, January 7, 1919; Herald, November 17, 1921.

21. For further reference: Post, November 18, 1909; Tribune, October 4, 1915; Times, November 14, 1922.

22. For further reference: Tribune, November 12, 1884; Times, November 13, 1918; Times, November 15, 1922; Times, November 21, 1923; Post, November 4, 1924; Post, November 7, 1927; Tribune, November 11, 1927.

tation says that the character must have "flavor," which is "...an impalpable quality less easily captured than the scent of a flower, the peculiar and most essential attribute of any work of art..." In the same vein, Stark Young, in the Times of November 2, 1924, writes of Pirandello's characters. In their defense, he says: "[They] have the reality of mental experience only, not of actual daily life. They are types in the life of the brain." Percy Hammond, writing a review of O'Neill's play, The Straw, also approves of both the human and unreal characters; he says: "[In this play]...consumptive characters and their disease, its beginnings and development, is [sic] its motive power."

A summary of the criticism regarding the function and nature of the character shows that the critics have a wide range of interest and that criticism has been seeking new standards, growing away from the limitations of historical accuracy and realism toward the unlimited field of fancy. This new field, if limited at all, is bounded only by the laws of drama and art in their most general interpretation. ✓

4. Criticism of Mood

Critical interest in mood of the play is found mostly in the third decade of the twentieth century.

The only comment of the nineteenth century which

shows that the reviewer was sensitive to the spirit of the play was found in the Herald of October 6, 1857, in a review of Neg Merrilies. It claims:

There is, too, a wild romance about the drama with its stolen hair, its gypsies [sic] its pirates and its odd characters of all sorts, that makes it exceedingly interesting. We confess to a passion for such plays, and believe if there were not something good in them they would not make so strong a hold upon the public mind.

About the turn of the century, mood received more description but little criticism.²³ A sample comment of this period is one written by Towse for the Post of November 12, 1900, which says that Arthur Schnitzler's play had "...gloom enough not only for the three sad acts, but for three different tragedies."

Criticism as well as description was given to this aspect of the play in the third decade of the twentieth century. In the Times of November 4, 1924, a play is vividly reviewed as having "a breeze of inexhaustible life." In the Post for November, 1927, Anderson makes many references to mood. On the ninth he speaks of the charm of Coquette "...that is as quiet and effortless as its original, as untheatrical as a japonica in the front yard;" and on the thirtieth he analyzes The Centuries, saying: "Take the keynote from the title and it tunes up the whole melancholy meaning of Mr. Basshe's parable,

23. For further reference: Herald, November 28, 1891; Herald, November 29, 1891; Tribune, November 13, 1900; Post, November 10, 1903; Times, November 11, 1923.

or at least sets the pitch for its dissonance." In addition to these impressions, a contemporary one from the Herald-Tribune, written by Arthur Ruhl in a column headed Second Nights, is included because of the more objective effort to criticize mood.²⁴ Ruhl writes of the play called Stairs: "It had the rare quality of freshness, it had humor and satiric bite, a delicately handled sort of tragic wistfulness constantly played over it, and it was, at every instant, 'good theater'."

To summarize the criticism of mood of the play as it appears in newspaper reviews, it must be noted that the majority of critical comments fall in the third decade of the twentieth century. Furthermore at this time mood was analyzed by subjective and objective approaches.

5. Criticism of Language

The journalistic critics of New York occasionally turn their attention to the language in which the plays were written during the seventy-year period, 1857-1927. These remarks have a critical interest, for (1) they show a change in the critic's knowledge of dramatic requirements of language; and (2) in recent years there is an innovation which restores critical approval of poetic

24. For further reference: Times, November 12, 1912; Tribune, November 12, 1918; Tribune, November 22, 1921; Post, November 4, 1924; Herald-Tribune, November 12, 1924.

elements in dialogue; and (3) a shift of attitude toward sentimentality in the lines is noticeable in the data collected.

Two quotations will show the change in the critic's feeling for the dramatic necessities in language.²⁵ The first criticism, taken from the Times of November 26, 1884, demonstrates the general attitude of the earlier critics. This unknown reviewer writes of Love on Crutches, saying that "...its dialogue being fresh and abounding in clever touches...is well-nigh perfect." The second criticism is taken from the same paper but from the issue of November 6, 1927. This quotation from Escape, written by Brooks Atkinson, shows a high standard of dramatic values. Atkinson writes:

What glowing dialogue! From the rise of the curtain it spins along brilliantly, natural, progressive, bouyant, illuminating, delightful withal...Mr. Galsworthy writes so skimmingly that he can make points without mentioning them. "Do you know that prison?" Denant inquires of the Old Gentleman. "It's a bad style of architecture." Well, surely the architecture is beside the point of "Escape" as Mr. Galsworthy knows. But when Denant complains of it you catch an evanescent image of all his distresses behind the prison walls and you know how wretched he has been. Like an electric current, Mr. Galsworthy strikes sparks every time he establishes contact.

25. For further reference: Herald, March 5, 1858; Tribune, January 27, 1880; Times, November 26, 1884; Tribune, November 8, 1892; Tribune, November 28, 1906; Post, November 27, 1912; Tribune, October 10, 1915; Times, November 4, 1927; Post, November 30, 1927; Times, November 30, 1927.

The second observation of the criticism of language shows a return of the position which speaks in behalf of poetical elements. One quotation from the Times of November 5, 1912, and another from the same paper, dated November 12, 1924, illustrate this innovation.²⁶ The first one says of Yellow Jacket: "The dialogue has the flavor and charm of poetic imagination, and expresses most colorfully the ideas and thoughts to be conveyed." The second one stresses the position even more succinctly and strongly, saying that "...a scene with such poetry and terrible beauty as we rarely see in the theatre..." is to be found in Desire Under the Elms: it is "above anything O'Neill has written."

A third comment must be made regarding the shift of attitude toward sentimentality in the lines. Four or five reviews beginning with 1866 and running as late as 1890 attest to the pleasure which the audience found in the sentiment in the play and to the critic's approval of this pleasure. Two quotations from the Tribune testify to the popularity of this attitude as well as to the nature of the criticism. The first occurs in the issue for November 28, 1865, in a review of Boucicault's Octoroon.²⁷

26. For further reference: Tribune, November 30, 1892; Post, November 12, 1924.

27. For further reference: Tribune, November 25, 1865; Herald, November 15, 1888; Herald, November 29, 1891.

It says:

It is a play that never fails to please since it harmonizes with the sentiments of humane persons, in reference to the subject of white slavery, and since it is fraught with strong emotional influence, and with exciting incidents...it takes strong hold upon the fancy and the heart.

The second occurs on October 5 of the next year. Of Our American Cousin, the reviewer writes:

Its half sentimental, half melodramatic story appeals to sympathy, while its central character--the magnanimous Yankee whose outside is rough but whose heart is noble...who does justice to an injured woman, and copiously chaffs the British aristocracy--is a particularly pleasing personage to many American minds.

After the beginning of the twentieth century the germs of critical doubt regarding the value of sentiment appear in the theatre reviews full-blown. Towse of the Post writes on November 17, 1903:

Mrs. Ward's story was packed with sophistries and false sentiment; much of the play would be nauseous if it were not so manifestly silly and untrue. As it is it leaves an unpleasant flavor behind it; but this is likely to be tolerated for the sake of the exceedingly clever acting of Miss Davis.

On November 2, 1915, Towse writes with stronger disapproval of sentiment.²⁸ In this review of Eternal

28. For further reference: Herald, January 14, 1877; Herald, November 29, 1891; Post, November 17, 1903; Post, November 30, 1909; Times, November 13, 1918; Post, November 16, 1921.

Magdalene, he says: "But the essential weakness of the piece lies in its lack of any real grasp...of any vital and universal theme, its superficiality, and its sentimental extravagance."

From this point on, disapproval of sentiment changes into a frank recognition of its place in the theatre.

When Percy Hammond reviews They Knew What They Wanted in the Herald-Tribune of November 25, 1924, he says: "It is a capable merger of the everlasting elements of tears and sunshine, male and female, sin and contrition. Such hard punches as it bestows are softened by the mellow gloves of humor and sentiment." A second illustration of the new point of view which re-echoes the middle of the nineteenth century is found in a review by Brooks Atkinson in the Times of November 6, 1927.²⁹ He writes: "... it is a splendid achievement full of sweetened wisdom, and it is written expertly."

A summary of the criticism of language of the plays that are being reviewed shows several changes of critical position. In the first place, standards of understatement and suggestion, which have been employed by recent dramatists, draw forth criticism of language based on essential dramatic values. In the second place, poetical elements are being

29. For further reference: Tribune, January 25, 1918; Times, November 10, 1918; Tribune, November 9, 1921; Herald-Tribune, November 25, 1924.

given critical approval in twentieth century reviews with criticism that shows sharp analysis. In the third place, critical approval of sentiment, which occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century, is finding a rebirth in the post-war reviews of the twentieth century.

6. Criticism in Related Points

There are two points related to playwriting which drew the attention of the critics. In the first place, there was a spurious effort to judge plays by general literary standards, and, in the second place, there was a tendency to estimate the intellectual strength and imagination of the author. The criticism of literary standards shows a shift of critical emphasis towards higher dramatic values, and the criticism of the playwright's manner shows an increase in the critic's observation and analysis.

A close inquiry into the spurious critical phenomenon which tested playwriting by general literary standards shows that this activity began as early as 1877. For that year there are two quotations in the Herald which show the birth of this standard.³⁰ On January 14 the

30. For further reference: Tribune, January 6, 1880; Tribune, November 13, 1884; Tribune, November 15, 1892; Post, November 18, 1906; Post, November 21, 1906; Post, November 30, 1912; Post, November 10, 1915.

unknown reviewer attacks the purely theatrical play, The Lady of Lyons: "It was not written from human nature, but for the stage, and it has the sentiment of the stage, the smell of the footlights." And on the twenty-fifth he writes again, "Altogether the drama is a piece of stage contrivance rather than a literary work."

This type of criticism thrived for many years. Its most ardent admirer was William Winter of the Tribune. On January 2, 1880, for example, he wrote an unsigned review of False Friend: "Its literary tone...is refined and is stimulating to the imagination. There is plenty of fanciful suggestiveness..." A fad for dramatizations gave Winter and the other critics who desired literary characteristics on the stage a continued opportunity to revolt against the dramatizer's failure to keep the style of the original work.³¹

Before the close of the nineteenth century, however, the divorce between literary and dramatic standards began to occur. One reviewer who used the dramatic rather than the literary standard for judging plays was Percy Hammond of the Herald-Tribune.³² In a review of Coquette on November 9, 1927, he describes the play as being "actual, genuine, dramatic." In addition to this substitution

31. For further reference: Times, June 8, 1866; Sun, November 10, 1903; Sun, November 23, 1909; Tribune, November 23, 1909; Sun, November 3, 1915; Times, November 13, 1918.

32. For further reference: Sun, November 23, 1909; Post, November 5, 1912; Tribune, November 20, 1915; Tribune, October 12, 1918; Post, November 3, 1921.

of dramatic for literary standards, Hammond goes a step further and expects even a degree of the theatrical to reappear. A comment in the Herald-Tribune for November 6 indicates this extreme position.³³ Of Escape, he writes: "Among other enthusiastic things that may be said for Mr. Galsworthy as a skillful, mature and profound dramatist, is that he is a cunning showman when he has a mind to be."

The second point related to playwriting which received considerable critical comment was the playwright's manner. These statements show simply higher demands of the author's intellectual strength and imagination in recent years. In opposition to the artificial manner of the nineteenth century, John Corbin observed with approval strength and individualism in the naturalistic plays--ones that made most critics grieve because of their vulgarity.³⁴ In a review of Rachel Grother's Three of Us in the Sun of November 18, 1906, Corbin digresses to explain his attitude:

The quality which commands the better half is a sort of democratic realism. To the English stage, our strongest foreign influence, we have been indebted for the comedy of high society in which folk of the common lot serve somewhat as foils for the socially elect. To the French stage we are owing for the well made or, as we should say, the manufactured play of situation.

In a review a week earlier, he had applied this point of

33. For further reference: Times, November 11, 1915.

34. For further reference: Post, November 9, 1918; Times, November 13, 1923.

view briefly, but directly, to the play under review. Of The Shulamite, he says: "It has, however, the virtue, which its like seldom have, of presenting characters and situations with a certain solid, if crude, reality."

A second critical observation showed that the standard of intellectual strength was being qualified by a standard of subtlety.³⁵ John Anderson, an adherent to the new position, finds opportunity to attack the unqualified position which Corbin upheld in 1906. In a review of O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms, in the Post, November 12, 1924, Anderson writes:

There was apparent a mistaking of mere crudity for power; there was a lack of overtones and subtleties...At any rate, it seems untouched by the playwright's imagination, a sterile bit of realism that reaches out for something beyond, but fails somehow to attain it...

Whether the judgment of Anderson is confirmed by later years or not, the review shows that the critic supported his position with observation, detail, and analysis. As the reviewer continues, he says: "Mr. O'Neill manages better with his shorter pieces, where his vigor, and even his brutality, make for effect through shock; one needs a different dramatic equipment for a full-length play."

35. For further reference: Sun, November 11, 1906; Times, November 13, 1918; Times, November 11, 1923.

A summary of the criticism of the written play shows a wide range of critical interest; changing standards of theme and character, new demands of plot and mood; and many discriminating statements. In regard to the wide range of interest, it must be pointed out that the critics have discussed the following: the intrinsic and moral aspects of the theme; the structure, the movement, the probability, the originality of the plot; the various functions and the nature of the characters; the development of mood; the dramatic, poetic, and sentimental values of the language of the play; and some related points such as the literary merit of the play and the imaginative strength and subtlety of the playwright.

A summary of the shifts of critical emphasis and of innovations in criticism shows increasing demands of significance were made of the theme of the play as the years passed. Also the narrow connotations of the word "moral" were widened; simultaneously this term received a strong attack and an increase of the theatrical importance. In regard to the plot of the play, critical approval was given to new forms of playwriting. Demands for dynamic conflict replaced the static sense of contrast of the late nineteenth century and its interest in incident or rapid action. New psychological, sociological, and aesthetic tests were applied to the characters of the play. A new criterion developed in the late twentieth century to judge

the mood of the play. In regard to matters of language, the sense of movement and dramatic climax increased; a revival of poetic demands appeared; and a new attitude toward the sentimental requirements asserted themselves in the twentieth century criticism. Dramatic, and even theatrical, tests replaced the literary tests of the late nineteenth century. And, lastly, the criterion of strength which appeared in the early twentieth century was qualified by later critics with demands for subtleties and fine distinctions.

The nature of this criticism shows that the critics have accepted a psychological point of view, which has added penetration to their analysis and understanding to their conclusions. In regard to comments on the movement of the play and the mood, there has been an increasing sensitivity, on the part of the critic, to receive an impression from the performance, but also a corresponding effort to objectify the impression and support it with detailed illustration.

On the whole the criticism shows that, though much of the observation and analysis has been superficial, on the other hand, there are instances of breadth of point of view, and thoughtful judgment.

CHAPTER V

CRITICISM OF THE PRODUCTION

The last part of this study deals with the criticism of the scenery and costuming. Critics have regularly paid attention to these pictorial aspects of the play, particularly to the scene; and the nature of their critical comment has changed during the seventy years from which the data have been collected. Some reviewers have merely described the scenes; others have found them appropriate, magnificent, accurate, suited to mood and spirit, or emphasizing the dramatic values. Throughout both centuries opinion has been expressed regarding the relation of the actor to the set, giving judgments which also deserve consideration in this paper.

1. Criticism of the Set

Examination of the comments that have been taken from the reviews shows how the critical attitude toward the appropriateness, the magnificence, and the accuracy of the decoration changed with time. When the unknown reviewer of the Herald on September 23, 1863, writes of

the set used for Forrest's production of Virgilius, he has only a general and indefinite attitude, characteristic of early American comments on scenery.¹ He concludes his review abruptly: "The scenery of the play was magnificent, and what is still better, appropriate."

The succeeding discussion will show a change occurring in the meanings of both these adjectives. Magnificence and opulence arose in critical interest in the scenery turned toward display away from standards of suitability. Magnificence of scenery continued to increase until 1884. At this time the productions of Henry Irving so outdid all previous performances in splendor and historical correctness that the growth of the critical movement culminated in these productions. The approval of Irving's stage artistry is expressed by the reviewer of the Times² who writes in an issue for November 11, 1884:

To the eye it presented a constant succession of agreeable pictures, notable for fidelity--to nature and harmonious coloring; in the dresses and the groupings of the persons on the stage good taste and ingenuity were exhibited...while we are of the opinion that Mr. Irving's services as a reformer and missionary in stage affairs have been dwelt upon with too much stress in certain quarters, yet he is

1. For further reference: Herald, December 10, 1858 (Odell, VII, 123); Times, November 29, 1868 (Odell, VIII, 470).
2. For further reference: Post, November 28, 1864; Tribune, February 5, 1866 (Odell, VIII, 21); Tribune, November 11, 1884; Herald, November 19, 1884; Times, November 13, 1888; Herald, November 18, 1891; Tribune, November 24, 1896; Herald, October 1, 1899.

a student and an artist, and his representations ...are delightful for their completeness, beauty, and the scholarship displayed in them.

Accuracy in stage production developed in other than historical plays and the critics found that judgment of an increasingly photographic realism was necessary. Three criteria are used by the critics of the nineteenth century in forming this judgment of realistic scenery.³ One is impregnated with the pseudo-classic standards of an earlier period. An example of this is found in the Times of November 17, 1868, in a review of After Dark; or London by Night: "The piece is illustrated by some of the most realistic paintings ever exhibited on the New York stage, one garden and villa set in the third act being of surpassing chasteness and beauty." A second judgment is based upon the distinctly theatrical purpose of illusion. A quotation which illustrates this is found in the Times of February 8, 1869. It reads:

The scenery generally is admirable, and particularly where it arises...to accomplish what belongs to its province--to produce an illusion. Where it steps beyond this purpose, it is laborious in effort and heavy in detail. To represent pedestals, pillars, balconies, emblems, urns, etc., in the "round" is a mistake. It is the fancy of a carpenter, and not the vision of an artist. Realism on the stage is a dangerous heresy. It may be questioned

3. For further reference: Tribune, October 30, 1867; (Odell, VIII, 280-1); Post, February 9, 1875 (Odell, IX, 529); Herald, November 19, 1884; Times, November 12, 1884; Herald, November 18, 1891; Times, November 10, 1896; Post, November 27, 1900; Post, November 20, 1903; Post, November, 13, 1906; Sun, November 5, 1912; Times, November 27, 1923.

if actual furniture be desirable in anything save comedies of the day....We consider, for our own part, the fountain in Mr. Isherwood's beautiful scene in the third act as an infringement which ought to be reached by an injunction. The best scene...is the chapel scene....It is not the plane and the saw, but a visible illusion of a cathedral....It represents the principal aisle of a large church, with an altar or an oratory....The setting of the scene is almost perfect; but here again the violation of the idealistic law,--or to put it in humbler phrase the law of illusion--is grossly noticeable. A large real Bible--printed no doubt by authorized printers--turned down at the page that suits the dirty finger of the scene shifter, lies open on the desk. It is perfectly unnecessary to desecrate a volume in such wise.⁴

A third judgment shows the critic using the standard of realistic accuracy as an end in itself without relating it to the essential idea of the play. An example of this is found in a review of Partners in the Times for November 15, 1888. The critic simply states: "The simulation of nature in some of the scenes is wonderfully exact."

In the twentieth century, two quotations testify to the continuation of critical approval of accurate, realistic settings, but these show a change of standards.⁵ When John Anderson reviews Shipwrecked in the Post of November 13, 1924, he has examined the dramatic values of the set before he writes:

This is an average play magnificently mounted. It advances realistic stage setting to the same height of perfection enjoyed

4. Odell, Annals, VIII, 418.

5. For further reference: Post, November 6, 1912.

occasionally by the symbolical and impressionist methods. The result is something to make Mr. Belasco gnash his teeth with envy.

On the twenty-second of the same month, Towse, also writing in the Post, accepts realistic accuracy if it is properly modified by selection and fancy. Realizing the importance of these dramatic values, he writes: "Realism only becomes valuable in proportion to the beauty, value, or significance of the subject to be treated, and especially, when it is reinforced and emphasized by creative imagination."

In the twentieth century, appropriateness, which had only general and indefinite meanings in the nineteenth century reviews, becomes narrowed to the specific interpretation of the mood and spirit of the play. Three short phrases taken from recent reviews show this standard in its narrow application. In the Times for November 7, 1924, Stark Young speaks of a production which has settings and costumes "...full of quirks and whimsies as a Christmas pantomime;" and again on the eighteenth in the settings of The Merchant of Venice he sees "the spirit of pageantry and delight." On the twentieth of the month, Towse in the Post finds the same standard applicable to an interpretation of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. In disapproval of the mounting, he writes:

It was a lively, picturesque and entertaining performance, but, except

occasionally, the true spirit and style were wanting. Even if these had been present, the attempt to interpret an old classic by the modern methods of Reinhardt would have been disastrous.

The greater innovation of the twentieth century critic was the analysis of new methods of lighting and staging for their dramatic values. Spots and dimmers, curtain sets and varied playing levels demanded criticism according to standards of contrast, climax, emphasis, and suggestion.

When Reinhardt's Midsummer Night's Dream appeared in New York the reviewers differed in opinion; however, their judgments and comments show insight and a keen dramatic sense.⁶ Brooks Atkinson, in the Times of November 30, 1927, found in the lack of contrast in the spectacle "soft harmony" and an atmosphere that suggested "no time and no place--not even the mortal coil." On the same date, John Anderson, writing in the Post, says in disapproval of its action and lighting effects: "Its pace, and movement, and color were only slightly varied from end to end so that it lost steadily in interest."

A similar contrast of opinion is found in the

6. For further reference: Tribune, January 25, 1918; Post, November 23, 1918; Times, November 15, 1921; Herald, November 22, 1921; Times, November 17, 1923; Post, November 6, 1924; Times, November 18, 1924; Times, November 9, 1927; Times, November 16, 1927; Times, November 27, 1927; Times, November 30, 1927. See also Appendix No. 8.

reviews of Desire Under the Elms and a similar high standard of reviewing from the point of view of dramatic effectiveness. Again John Anderson writes disapprovingly: in the Post of November 12, 1924, he says:

The action takes place in a bare ugly New England farmhouse, equipped for the occasion by Robert Edmond Jones with a front removable in sections, so that various parts of its interior may be revealed as the occasion demands; a large farmhouse built close down to the place formerly occupied by the footlights, which throws the action almost too near the audience for perfect comfort.

On the other hand, Stark Young, writing in the Times on the same date, believes: "The Jones setting was profoundly dramatic...A farmhouse...was for all practical purposes built there on the stage; a scene that was realistic but at the same time strangely and powerfully heightened in effect."

2. Criticism in Related Points

In addition to these comments on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the setting, critical consideration was turned to the relation of the player and the set. Three opinions are sufficient to represent the critical standard which existed during the period under examination.⁷

7. For further reference: Times, November 7, 1868; Tribune, March 30, 1880; Tribune, November 11, 1884; Times, November 27, 1888; Herald, November 18, 1891; Tribune, November 25, 1900; Post, November 13, 1906; Post, November, 28, 1906; Tribune, November 9, 1909; Times, November 5, 1912; Post, November 6, 1912; Times, November 25, 1923; Post, November 13, 1924; Post, November 18, 1927.

Each believes that the setting must not interfere but aid the actor. The first one, taken from the Herald of November 18, 1891, shows the critic keeping his standard aloof from the popular whim. Of the Meininger players from Germany, he writes:

The audience had not come to see the Caesar or the Brutus or the Cassius, but the much vaunted stage picture...They did not mind the respectable tameness of the Mark Anthony, the weakness of Calpurnia, and the conventionality of Brutus, and they delighted in the realistic storm, the splendor of the dresses, the archaeological truth and the beauty of the Roman scenes amid which the actors moved and breathed and had their nonce. But Shakespeare suffered from the very wealth and beauty of details which formed his play. There was no Irving, no Salvini, no Bernhardt in the foreground to interpret his genius.

The second in the Post of November 6, 1912, desiring to keep the actor forward appears with a clearer sense of the dramatic values on the part of the critic. Towse writes:

The plain fact is that the play offers splendid opportunities for acting and elocution, and where these are satisfactorily grasped, the quality of the attendant decorations is a matter of secondary importance. A luxurious setting, which can only be employed at the cost of the sequence and the spirit of the piece, is likely to do more harm than good.

A third illustration of the critic's interest in the players relation to the set shows a growing knowledge of theatre values on the part of the critic. On November

18, 1922, John Corbin wrote in the Times:

It was an achievement against obstacles. The setting provided by Robert Edmond Jones though beautiful...was trivial and grotesque, encroached upon the playing space...incongruities of locale were quite unnecessary...scenically, there was no atmosphere.

A summary of these three illustrations of the same point of view shows a close familiarity of the critic with stage problems.

3. Criticism of Costuming

The few criticisms of costuming, another aspect of the production, show a wide variety of standards during this period. Some commentators regard the actor's dress as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Since this type of criticism is more frequent in the nineteenth century, this quotation from the Herald of September 22, 1863, will serve to illustrate it.⁸ The comment runs: "Why should Ophelia be forced to wear crinoline when our fashionables are all leaving it off... Miss Ada Clifton dressed Ophelia like a belle of last season."

The trenchant judgment of Stark Young in the Times of November 2, 1924, is a distinct contrast to this

8. For further reference: Times, February 4, 1866 (Odell, VIII, 151); Tribune, December 25, 1866 (Odell, VIII, 74-5); Times, February 8, 1867 (Odell, VIII, 417); Herald, October 21, 1870 (Odell, IX, 3); Herald, November 14, 1884; Times, November 19, 1884.

superficial nineteenth century opinion.⁹ Aware of the subordinate importance of costuming, but also conscious of its function in relation to the whole, Young writes of The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, saying that, if the actor's were costumed in the clothes of thirty years ago, their acting would lose that hesitancy which it now has, and they could give the play its true quality and feeling.

A summary of the criticism of the production aspects of the play shows a range of the critic's interests and changes of critical opinion. The range of his interests covered the scenery, the lighting, the costumes, the dramatic values in the production elements and the relation of the player to the set.

Changes of critical emphasis occurred steadily as the magnificent, opulent settings of the third quarter of the nineteenth century gave way to the realistic settings of the early twentieth. Although the critical terminology remained much the same, such words as "magnificent," "appropriate," and "accurate" acquired new meanings. The innovation of new forms of staging, more complicated lighting units caused a shift of critical emphasis away from absolute realism to a more limited and highly selected realism in

9. For further reference: Tribune, January 29, 1880; Times, November 5, 1912; Sun, November 12, 1912; Times, November 13, 1918; Times, November 4, 1923; Times, November 18, 1924.

the third decade of the twentieth century. An increasingly greater sense of dramatic values accompanied the occasional criticism of costume and make-up. In this regard the chief critical change showed that the view which maintained that costume was mere decoration was replaced by that view which held that dress must assist the actor in communicating the essential idea of the play.

The later criticisms differ from the early ones in number, analysis, and detail. The later criticisms show that the writers have a new understanding of significant, dramatic values.

CONCLUSIONS

This survey of the journalistic dramatic criticism, in selected New York papers between the years of 1857 and 1927, has shown that the critics had a wide range of interest. They have commented upon various phases of acting--principally the actor's purpose, his conception of the role, his intellectual, emotional, and physical techniques, and related matters such as his equipment and his relation to the other parts of the performance. The critics have commented upon the commercial, the recreational, and the aesthetic purpose of the performance. They have judged the play by analyzing its theme, its plot construction, its characters, its language, and such related points as its literary merit and the imaginative strength or subtlety which it reveals. They have frequently described the scenery and shown their standards of accuracy and appropriateness in their description. New forms of production have been analyzed for their essentially dramatic nature. Costuming has also received some critical concern.

Further this study has revealed that the critical standards employed during this period have shifted in

emphasis and point of view. Chief among these changes has been the rise and decline of realism throughout the period under consideration. This change was most noticeable in the examination of the criticism of acting, which was generally regarded as the most important critical concern. Realistic standards approved the life-like rather than traditional conception of the actor's role. They approved consistency and sincerity in the expressive techniques rather than the extreme variety exhibited and approved before the advent of realism. Intensity and restraint were standards which rose as realism declined. For the realistic critic the matter of beauty was of less importance than formerly, but the integrity of the actor's personality increased in value.

Second in importance was the increasing emphasis on playwriting and production. As the elements of the play were analysed by the critic, shifts of emphasis and new standards occurred. The significance of the theme of the play became increasingly important. Its moral aspects were both scorned and approved with qualifications. New forms of play structure were approved, particularly those that stressed dramatic movement and dynamic conflict. Characters were analyzed psychologically, sociologically and aesthetically by the critics of the twentieth century. After 1900, critics sensitized themselves to the mood of the play and

to the dramatic elements of the language. The reviewers replaced the literary standard with new criteria of a dramatic and theatrical nature. They commented first on the strength and later on the subtlety of the playwright's art.

Critical comments on production show a dual tendency. Like acting, the problems of production were judged according to the realistic philosophy of the critics; like playwriting, production ushered in many new forms that necessarily created new criteria. The rise and decline of the critics' realistic philosophy affected their estimates of production by creating in turn standards of magnificence, accuracy, and appropriateness. The last term was used to refer to the essential meaning or spirit of the play by the Post-World War critics, who gave greatest emphasis to this term. The new criteria used for judging new forms of production showed an intimate knowledge on the part of the critic with theatrical values, such as balance, contrast, emphasis, climax, and detachment. Although most of the critics were aware of the subordination of the production elements to the acting elements, these comments also showed an increasing knowledge of dramatic problems on the part of the critics. The criticism of production, particularly, showed that the critical standard--that the function of the whole depends upon the function of the part--was increasing in importance.

Of lesser importance, but noteworthy, has been the

balanced and well-integrated purpose which recent critics have applied to theatrical performance. This purpose combined the intellectual and emotional appeals and estimates the delight and the profit derived from the performance. In addition, the critics have resolved the antagonism between the commercial and aesthetic points of view.

The nature of this criticism has been, at times, superficial and limited, and, at other times, broad in scope. At its best, the criticism of acting was significant because it saw the essential points and judged them by aesthetic standards applicable beyond the limits of the theatre. The criticism of playwriting was at times keenly analytical and understanding of dramatic problems. Criticism of production was at times significant, particularly when the standard--the function of the whole depends upon the function of the parts--was used in judging. The best criticism of the purpose of the performance was observed in the twentieth century critics who examined the purpose from a balanced, well-integrated point of view. In general one finds that there have been three types of criticism. Some have shown standards of only local interest; others have had a contemporary or national significance; and still others have been universal and applicable to theatrical or aesthetic efforts in general. Each of these types offered

examples of opinion ably supported by detail. This was true of impressionistic as well as more objective criticism. Also each of the three types of criticism showed conservative tendencies throughout. If innovations on the stage did not agree with the critics' standards, they were not given critical approval. Consequently, the standards of the reviewers often lagged behind those of the theorist or the experimenter.

On the whole, this study has shown that, though journalistic dramatic criticism has suffered from haste, poor observation, and feeble purpose, there have been, on the other hand, statements of high purpose, of dramatic, theatrical, literary, and aesthetic significance. More and more they show promise for the future of this institution, which is vital to the American theatre today.

APPENDIX

The following selected theatre reviews represent the type of raw data from which critical comments for this dissertation were abstracted. Nos. 1 through 8 represent the daily reviews of the various decades between 1857 and 1927. Nos. 9 and 10 represent the type of review that prognosticates or summarizes the current theatrical activities.

Many of these reviews appear unsigned in the newspapers. Some of these must remain anonymous; however, in four cases the reviewer can be surmised. Nos. 3 and 4 are presumably written by William Winter, dramatic critic of the Tribune, 1865-1909; no. 5 is presumably written by J. Ranken Towse, dramatic critic of the Post, 1874-1927; no. 7 is presumably written by Alexander Woolcott, dramatic critic of the Times, 1914-1922. No. 6 is signed by John Corbin; no. 8 by J. Brooks Atkinson, and no. 10 by Stark Young.

No. 1. New York Herald, November 10, 1857, p. 5, col. 1

Laura Keene's Theatre

The French drama, "The Sea of Ice," was played here to quite good house [sic] last evening; there being not less than one thousand persons in the house, and the receipts being about \$400.

When this play was first produced in this city, some years since, we took occasion to say that it was quite a perfect work of its kind, and predicted lasting popularity for it. It is neither original nor natural, nor even reasonable, but it is admirably constructed and exceedingly effective. The action commences on board a French ship bound from France to the Pacific. The passengers include the captain's wife and daughter, and one Carlos, an adventurer who stirs up mutiny among the crew, seizes the vessel, and sets the passengers adrift. The mother dies but the child is saved in an icy sea by the fidelity of Barabas, her father's steward, a type of the French funny servant. The succeeding acts represent the return of the characters to France. The lost child has been brought up by an Indian tribe under the name of Ogarita, discovered by her relations and brought back to the Faubourg St. Germain. Carlos appears as the Marquis del Marte, a rich Mexican nobleman and the suitor of Ogarita. Here the dramatist has produced two happy effects--the contrast between the conventionalities of society and the wild grace and freedom of the half-savage estray--and the innate repugnance which she feels towards the adventurer, whom of course she cannot recognize as the murderer of her father. The manner in which, with the assistance of Barabas, she confounds the plots of the false Marquis and secures the reward which virtue always ought to have but rarely obtains, likewise awarding to vice its due punishment, is quite interesting, and we will not detract from that interest by any further details. The production of the play is the happiest bit of the season at this house, and has quite redeemed its drooping fortunes. The principal parts are admirably acted. Miss Laura Keene understands and reproduces all the delicate and strong shades in the character of Ogarita. It is a performance quite after the manner of Celeste, but it is still not an imitation. It has that charming blending of delicacy of finish and strong effect which is the distinguishing characteristic of the French stage. Mr. Jordan was excellent as Carlos, and Mr. Jefferson looked and acted as if he had just walked out of the Palais Royal. In all the mechanical details, and in the nicest points of scenery and costumes, the performance was quite perfect. It was received with all the attributes of a genuine success.

No. 2. The New York Times, November 17, 1862, p. 5, col. 2-3.

Amusements

Booth: Tragedy and comedy are quite as nearly allied as wit and madness, and equally "thin partitions doe the bounds divide." In fact, they are made up of the same ingredients and combinations. Given, a fool and a woman, and it is about an even toss-up whether a tragedy or a comedy will result--none can predict which way the scale will turn. "Romeo" had a deep well of humor at heart, and would have turned out a rare wag had that little affair with "Juliet" taken a different direction, and "Hamlet" manages to crack some capital jokes even on the anvil of his anger and revenge. If called on to select a man for the higher paths of comedy, we would unhesitatingly fix on him who most excelled in the tragic walk. Certainly we know an eminent tragedian or two who would make sad failures, if they were even tempted to play the part of Yorick's skull, in "Hamlet." But these are the tragedians who are what the old phrases tell us the poet should be--borne; the tragedians whom tradition indorses, and the popular taste sometimes clamors for, but whom the critic very carefully skips, and the playgoer of aesthetic tastes religiously avoids. Muscle, certainly, goes a great way, but on the stage--as well as in the world, which the stage is supposed to represent--sudden emergencies sometimes occur in which the brains are both useful and necessary. The hand that can touch the spiritual harp skillfully, waking all its deep tones of passion, should also be competent to thrum the merry guitar of the lighter feelings. And here is where Edwin Booth's genius--for genius he has--makes itself strikingly manifest. Seeing him as Iago, one were almost sorry to fancy him rollicking about the stage as Don Caesar de Bazan, but seen in the latter character, and he gives it so charming a tone, that we almost wish he would confine himself to such rôles altogether, and wholly eschew that of the subtle, remorseless villain.

Mr. Booth gives depth and tone to all his pictures. Certain it is, he does not tear a passion to tatters, but he portrays the passions very much as they develop themselves in real life. Our friend Richard, of hump-backed distinction, was not a mouthing ranting braggart. He was cool in demeanor and polite and careful of speech, rather than otherwise he would carve you his nephews in the Tower with the unconscious look and absent air of one who "does good by stealth and blushes to find it fame;" but yet the carving was done as surely as it was silently. We fancy that those who pronounce Booth "tame" in this and in other impersonations, if they looked a little more closely, would see that his apparent quiet is but the calmness and concentratedness of

deep purpose and passion--the quiet exterior of a torrent that below is boiling. That he does "not touch the feelings" may be true enough as relates to those who can only be moved when a harrow is dragged over the soul, but we have seen the house very still occasionally while Booth played--a calm of silence that was only broken by a thunder of applause.

As Sir Edward Mortimer, in the "Iron Chest," Mr. Booth has of late won a meed of praise from those who withheld it from his impersonations of Shakespearian characters. In this play, however, he labors under one great disadvantage--the play itself is so excreable in point of taste, plot and construction, as scarcely to merit the name. The conviction is forced upon us by the text, at every turn, that Sir Edward Mortimer is a fool, and suffers from indigestion; yet Mr. Booth manages to give the character such an interpretation and rendering that it has great dramatic force, aside from its own inherent weakness. In all his plays, too, he is obliged to suffer the inconvenience of being a star. Stars are isolated, by their immense salaries and emoluments, from very hearty sympathy and support. And here about "supports." If a star in the theatrical firmament, like one in the heavens above, is obliged to maintain itself unsupportedly and alone, flashing over the stage as comets do athwart the skies, dragging at its heels a nebulous train of milk-and-water inconsistencies, men and women whose knowledge of propriety in speech is even more limited than their ideas of propriety in action, and whose acquaintance with rhetoric commences and terminates with the letter R--the fault is its own alone. If we ever have a "star" company throughout, where even the supernumeraries who move the furniture about and tack down and take up the green baize which passes current with the popular mind for carpet, shall be men of refinement and education, it will only be when the salaries of the stars are lessened, or the whole astral system done away with altogether.

The Don Caesar of Mr. Booth is excellent. The gay, careless, but noble and high-spirited Spaniard, is very different indeed from the compound between fool and sot that other actors have accustomed us to. He is something to watch and study--mind looks out from the background. Indeed, the closing remark of the foregoing sentence will apply to all of Mr. Booth's pictures. Nature has been bountiful to him to give him an intellectual east of countenance and the carriage of a gentleman--youth and beauty he probably acquired by dint of careful study.

No. 3. New York Daily Tribune, November 26, 1878,
p. 5, col. 2-3.

The Comedy of Errors

"Many a year is in its grave" since last the "Comedy of Errors" was acted in this city, and some of those "who then took part in its frolic have joined the "innumerable caravan" on the other side of the river. The old piece--revived last night at the Park Theatre, which was crowded with amused spectators--comes up, accordingly, as something fresh and novel. It is, eminently, a play of animal spirits and mirthful activity. It aims at sport, and nothing else; and in this respect it stands alone amongst all the works of Shakespeare. It is his only farce; for the prelude of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, in "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*"--the best thing of the kind in our language--is less a farce than a burlesque. The idea of it, old before Shakespeare, and a thousand times used after him, in comic cross-purpose; and this is worked out in a tale of the wildest improbability. All readers who know the play, know that it is one of Shakespeare's earliest pieces; that it is based on the "*Menaechmi*" of Plautus and that it details, with fertile invention and gladsome zest, though in a mixed and florid style, a number of mistakes as to the identity of two pairs of twin children. The place is Ephesus; the time of the fourth century of the Christian Era; and the stress is laid, almost exclusively, upon incidents. There are no subtleties of character, either to perplex the actors or to worry the spectator. The twins *Antipholus* and the twins *Dromio* are--in respective pairs--to be precisely alike; and then, turned adrift in the old and picturesque city, they are to bring each other into successive "scrapes," till confusion shall have "made its masterpiece," and a comic idea is worn out by iteration.

Harry Leigh, of London, author of "*The Ballads of Cocayne*,"--a book that is full of delicious drollery--has very neatly hit off this idea of confused identity in the capital song of "*The Twins*." "And when I died the neighbors came and buried brother John," is the conclusion of these lines; and rumor has bruited forth a supplementary stanza, as to a still greater mistake--which placed one of these twins among the sheep and one among the goats. The drift of "*The Comedy of Errors*" is simple enough. It is the heartiest fooling. The actors are supplied with situations, language, and most amusingly mystifying incidents, and then they are let free to pour their own individuality, and especially their own humor, into the moulds of character. *Antipholus of Ephesus* must, indeed, evince harshness. The severity of his temper and the vigor of his animal life

remind the spectator of Ford, in "The Merry Wives." Antipholus of Syracuse, also somewhat imperious, is more prim and conventional; his thinkings and his acts savor of his bachelor condition. The Dromios are mere clowns--cut off from the same piece that furnished Grumio, Diondella, The Drunken Porter, Lancelot, and many more of Shakespeare's whimsical drolls. These Dromios will be dull or funny according to the nature of their representatives. Hogg and Harwood, who may be read of in Dunlap and Ireland, were the first Dromios ever seen in America: at the old Park, in 1804, Barnes and Hackett came next--at the same theatre, in 1827. The Brothers Placide--Harry and Tom--were very successful in these characters, in 1849, at Niblo's. John S. Clarke and William S. Andrews acted them, in a quaint, joyous and delightful way, at the Winter Garden, about fifteen years ago. They now fall to the lot of Crane and Robson, and "their lines have fallen in pleasant places."

These comedians were welcomed, last night, in the Park Theatre with such hearty good will and cheerful laughter as made the occasion quite a jubilee. They are favorites, and they deserve their good name. Neither of them brings extraordinary mind to the art of acting; neither of them possesses the charm of genius--as it was felt, for instance, in the acting of Burton and Blake, and as it is felt in that of Jefferson and Warren. "All men are not alike, alas good neighbor," says the sapient Dogberry. "An two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind." But, while deficient of the poetry, the delicacy, and the sweet humor of Jefferson, and also of that rich, juicy, delicious humor which Burton could diffuse over all that he touched, and which disappeared from our stage with poor Dan Setchell (unless, indeed it survives in Owens), Mr. Crane and Mr. Robson are the happy possessors of vigorous animal spirits, and of many droll and amusingly eccentric personal characteristics. They enter wholly into their situations of fun. They are grotesque, eccentric, vivacious and spirited. Their Dromios are quite as true to the author as any, no doubt, either past or yet to come; for, truly, there is no standard in Shakespeare by which to test them. The funniest, [sic] are the best. Probably the best moment for the two clowns is that of their first contemplation of each other; in this Crane and Robson were irresistibly ludicrous. Mr. Crane does the most difficult part of the work--since he is constrained to imitate Mr. Robson. It had been better--if practicable--the other way; for Mr. Crane is the abler and more humorous man of the two, and has the best method. A little of Mr. Robson's squeak pleases; but much of it is tiresome. Both personations were bright and droll with by-play, and the stimulation of a well diversified perplexity--which by both

actors was expressed by kindred expedients.

All due attention was given to the serious part of the piece--the business, that is, of old Aegean--which is one of the chief of Shakespeare's additions to the subject as he found it in Plautus. This part is the comedy jet, so to speak, of a work which otherwise is wholly farce. Mr. Charles Webb, making his first appearance in America, acted Aegean, and illustrated that conscientious, correct and quiet manner which is peculiar on the English stage. He was, however, so feeble that, except with Aegean's fine speech in the last act, he produced no noticeable effect. Adriana proved a dreadful infliction--though certainly acted with intelligent design. The raspy voices of the stage do really make theatre-going a frequent torture. The twins Antipholus were acted thoroughly well, though these--and their companion's parts--have, of course, room to grow in freedom of execution. The rather small stage of the Park Theatre has been skillfully utilized, and three commodious and picturesque views of an antique civic settlement are effectively presented. The rather modern interior was less pleasing. There was too much cornet in the first wait. Mr. Crane and Mr. Robson were recalled at the end of the second act. As a Shakespearean revival this is entirely creditable to all concerned in it, and well worthy of the public attention.

Mr. Booth and the Stock

The statement is made in a reputable journal that Edwin Booth, out of his dread of damaging comparisons, will not allow good actors to appear in company with himself. "The truth is generally known," we read, "that Mr. Booth does not seem to care to have first-rate actors around him; a light-house shows best in the night." This aspersion is not a new one. It springs up, in company with several other stock misrepresentations, every time Edwin Booth acts in New-York. It has, however, become so exceedingly stale, and it is so obviously and conspicuously unfounded that we are surprised to find it where we find it now. When Mr. Booth had his theatre in this city, his company, with which he acted, comprised, among others, James W. Wallack, Lawrence Barrett, Edwin Adams, Mark Smith, E. L. Davenport, David Anderson, James Stark, Mary Wells, D. W. Waller and Mrs. Waller. If these were not good actors, it would be well for some of the learned persons, who pepper Mr. Booth with their constant detraction, to point out what good actors are and where those paragons may be found. As to the company

now coöperating with Mr. Booth at the Fifth Avenue Theatre--which was thought quite good enough till Mr. Booth came, and which, we doubt not, will be thought quite good enough as soon as he has departed--it may easily be ascertained by anyone who will take the trouble to make the inquiry, that Mr. Booth had no voice whatever in its selection. Whether good or bad, it was provided by the manager of the theatre, and not by him. The truth is that the number of really good actors upon the stage has always been small; that, of late years, they have been, also, widely scattered; that a company made up of Booths and Barretts and Wallacks and Gilberts and Jeffersons is an impossibility; and that Shakespeare's plays will have the effect of dwarfing almost all actors who appear in them. Mr. Wallack's company, for example, is considered excellent; that belief, at all events; next to fidelity to the constitution is thought to be the mainstay of our social fabric, but we have no doubt that Mr. Wallack's Company would go to pieces like an egg-shell on Norman's Woe in a northeaster, if it were put into "Hamlet" or "Othello." Furthermore, Edwin Booth is the best tragic actor now living who speaks the English language; and it is not at all remarkable that even good actors should seem less good than they are when they act in his company. The writers who squirt their small venom over the public life of this actor cannot rub out this fact. His eminence has been won, and he owes it to nobody but himself. Some fresher slander, surely, might be devised than one which assumes that any actor on earth could be so foolish as to wish to surround himself with "sticks" upon the stage--the sure way to defeat all his own efforts, and destroy the best effects of his best acting. It would be just as rational to accuse a painter--a Corot or Meissonier--of hiring somebody to sit beside him at the easel, and jog his elbow at the most critical moments in his use of his brush.

Last Nights Events

Last night was a busy time in the local theatres, and several incidents occurred to which--passing them now with a word of record--we may find other occasions to refer. Edwin Booth, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, acted King Lear. John McCullough, at the Park Theatre, acted the same part. "That Lass o'Lowrie's" was brought out, at Booth's Theatre, and Marie Gordon--Mrs. John T. Raymond--acted The Lass. Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Williamson, at the Grand Opera House, acted in "Yulie" a new "American" drama, by Mr. F. Marsden, now presented for the first time. In the representation of "King Lear" at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, Mr. D. H. Harkins gave a pathetic performance of Edgar. A lady with an Iron

Jaw exercised that implement at the Aquarium--where we should suppose this female would prove a splendid ally for an advertising agent. Representations were given of "Our Club" at Wallack's, "Mother and Son" at the Union Square, and varieties at Barnum's and the San Francisco Minstrel Hall. Subjoined in the cast of "That Lass o'Lowrie's:"

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Joan Lowrie | Marie Gordon |
| Dan Lowrie | Mr. J. B. Booth |
| Sammy Craddock | Wm. Davidge |
| Fergus Derrick | H. Datton |
| Mr. Barholm | J. J. Spies |
| Paul Grace..... | J. G. Ritchie |
| Jud | Florence Wood |
| Spraggs..... | S. Brown |
| Brady | A. Morton |
| Anice Barholm..... | Geraldine Maye |
| Liz | Georgiana Flagg |

No. 4. New York Daily Tribune, November 11, 1884, p. 4, col. 6.

Re-entrance of Henry Irving

Mr. Irving, Miss Ellen Terry and the London Lyceum Theatre Company appeared at the Star Theatre last night in Shakespeare's beautiful comedy of "The Merchant of Venice," and they were welcomed with honest good feeling and hearty plaudits by a brilliant and appreciative audience. The applause which attended the first entrance of Portia was marked by that chivalric and affectionate cordiality which ever should and ever does accompany the presence of a true favorite; and the subsequent greeting awarded to Shylock was a veritable tumult of enthusiasm. Occasions of this kind are made memorable in this way. When to a noble artistic effort the public response is no less adequate than genuine, and they are long and proudly cherished in the playgoers memory. Miss Terry, Mr. Irving and their associates seemed pleased with this reception. They are, doubtless, glad to see New York again. New-York, evidently, is glad to see them.

Upon the general character of Mr. Irving's presentation of "The Merchant of Venice" there is no need of analytic comment at this time. The subject has been amply discussed upon previous occasions. It is proper to say, however, that now, as heretofore, the comedy has been treated as a comedy and not as a star piece for a tragedian, and has been mounted and dressed with a careful eye to correct detail and picturesque accessories. The presentation of the casket scene in full, the restoration of Shylock's scene with Antonio and the Jailer, and the restoration of Portia's words and conduct subsequent to the trial, together with the tender and romantic love-scene of Lorenzo and Jessica, are still prominent among the chief beauties of this revival. The deft introduction of Oriental music of a sonorous and barbaric strain to signalize the proceedings of the Prince of Morocco is still to be noted as an attendant charm. The maskers of Venice still glide their noiseless gondolas along her silent and gloomy canals. Shylock, as played by Mr. Irving, still inspires a certain anxious dread, and prompts a certain painful suspense by his formidable return across the vacant bridge to the dwelling left desolate by his fugitive daughter. The picture of the high court of Venice is still made opulent; imposing and real, by fresco and drapery, by guards and groups, by stately ceremonies, by a deft employment of pages within and a mob violent without, and by an intense and profound correctness of dramatic treatment. And still, to crown the pageant with a golden

light of happiness, the glittering but gentle mirth of Portia is made to play,--as Shakespeare meant it should play,--through an atmosphere of woman-like tenderness and unstinted hospitality, in a closing scene of summer luxury and princely wealth.

One scene is new, and most of the scenery has been refreshed. Beneath it all may be discerned the instinct that aims at completeness in the display of a subject as well as in pictorial embellishment. Judges who do not heartily like the acting of Henry Irving,--who deny that he possesses dramatic genius, and affirm that he is a clever schemer in social as well as theatrical art,--have been known to place a marked emphasis upon his skill and thorough-going care in the management of the stage. No sagacious observer, however, is misled by this amiable, but futile subterfuge. It is easy to place an undue stress upon this element in Mr. Irving's work. Nobody who has known him long as a public man will doubt either his diplomatic tact, his worldly wisdom, or his resolute purpose to succeed, any more than the poetic glamour of his intellect and the force of his splendid talent and discretion in the treatment of plays. But Mr. Irving is, first of all, an actor. Several of his best successes in London were gained without any especial attention to stage embellishment or the adroit illustration of dramatic points. The particulars in which his achievements as a stage manager have wholly and notably surpassed those of his predecessors and contemporaries--so far as we are able to perceive--are a felicitous mellowness and harmony of color in scenery, and a resolute and almost invariably successful subordination of details to a central purpose clearly defined and steadily pursued. There were heroes, however, before Agamemnon. Other men have presented plays as magnificently as Mr. Irving has presented them--if not always with as fine precision or perfection of charm. The Shakespearean revivals made in London by Macready, by Charles Kean, and by Samuel Phelps, and those likewise made in America by Burton, Barry, Edwin Booth, Lester Wallack, and Augustin Daly, should not be forgotten. That field had long been abandoned in the British capital when Mr. Irving arose to occupy it, and it had been considerably neglected here for a long period antecedent to his arrival in America. He was fortunate when he entered upon it, no less than wise. It is a field in which several of the old leaders of the stage have labored with zeal and liberality, and honor. Mr. Irving had done splendid things in carrying on a good work in this respect. But it is not upon his "staging" of plays, either wholly or mainly, that his title to renown should be supposed to rest. Much more has been claimed for him, as to this than he has ever claimed for himself.

It is as an actor that Mr. Irving ought first of all, and most of all, to be considered. As such we think him one of the most remarkable men of this age, and in many previous essays upon his acting--familiar to the readers of this journal--we have stated the reasons that justify this opinion. Last season Mr. Irving set before this public his performances of Mathias, in "The Bells," Charles the First, Louis XI, Shylock, Lesurques, Dubose, Doricourt, Benedick, and suggestions of Eugene Aram and Richard the Third. Several of these, pending the disclosure of new efforts, are now to be repeated, and the first that rears his head is Shylock. Persons who have seen in this character, Edwin Forrest, Gustavus V. Brooke, James W. Wallack, E. L. Davenport, Brogumil Dawson, Lawrence Barrett, and Edwin Booth, are not likely to be transported by the representation of it that is given by Mr. Irving. His performance, no doubt, is truthful in ideal, and flexible, and often splendidly potent in execution. Yet we are not impressed that this is one of the characters in which he stands alone. He presents, indeed, a consistent and symmetrical identity. He makes Shylock the incarnation--at first specious, then obvious--of inferred malignity. He depicts a Jew who hates his victim for being a Christian, but more for being a foe to usury. He shows a monster,--and yet he speedily preserves in him the strain of human nature, making him resentful of injuries, logical, fervent, and sincere in his own justification; domestic in his habits; reminiscent of a lost love, and that in a tone of passion and grief that is very tender and true. And he sets before us, in the indubitable form and color of nature, a huge and horrid type of implacable revenge. Nothing could be more significant of a perfect comprehension of Shylock's nature, and nothing could be finer as dramatic art than Mr. Irving's cold, wolfish glare and his demeanor of indomitable purpose in confronting the merchant, or the Court. But the manifestation of tremendous emotional power that is possible in Shylock, more particularly in the street scene, Mr. Irving does not accomplish--and, in fact, does not even attempt. The legend of Edmund Kean, in this character--a presence, meteoric, lurid and terrible--is not realized; and this overwhelming personality is what in Shylock seems even most essential.

It may sound like heresy to say it, but truly it is difficult to understand what the spectator really gains when he sees Shylock acted at his very best. There is, to be sure, a high view of the character. This was eloquently propounded, for example, by the German critic,--the rival of Heine,--Ludwig Borne. It makes Shylock the austere and majestic representative of a wronged and outraged nation, turning at last upon the oppressor, and resenting, in one terrific act of just retribution,

centuries of idignity. But this theory of Shylock is of dubious authenticity, and it is not, apparently, the theory pursued by Mr. Irving, whose Jew is an obnoxious character--cruel, malignant, hateful. Such a part does not and cannot call forth what is finest and best in the actor's nature. Those characters in which Mr. Irving is distinctly superb, if not supreme, are men in whose imagination, weirdness, and pathos are the prevailing attributes. His splendid concentration, in the performance, last night, and the many subtle touches of art in his mechanism, evoked great admiration. He was recalled after the first act and upon the Trial Scene, and the ardor of the house was obviously sincere. Miss Terry gave her beautiful embodiment of Portia, in which the elocution is a luxury to hear and in which consummate perception of what is most endearing in a woman's nature--loveliness, goodness and fidelity--is commingled with an arch merriment and an occasional tenderness, very delightful to see and feel. There was an enthusiastic recall at the end of the third act, and at the fall of the curtain.

There are a few changes in the cast. Mr. George Alexander appears as Bassanio, Mr. Tyars as Morecco, and Miss Emery as Jessica. Mr. Alexander is an actor who will be much liked here, for he shows a manly spirit, fine intelligence, and true refinement, and he seems to be neither self conscious nor self-assertive. As an artist, he has need to remedy the defect of undue haste in transitions of feeling and mood. Miss Emery is a charming Jessica--handsome, ingenuous, eager, and fortunate in a rich voice and good elocution. "Much Ado" will be presented on Thursday, and "Twelfth Night" on Tuesday of next week.

No. 5. The Evening Post, New York, November 10, 1896, page 7.

"The Sign of the Cross."

Mr. Wilson Barrett's play "The Sign of the Cross," which has made the fortune of its author in England, and comes to this country with the seal of high ecclesiastical approval and a variety of testimonials from a number of more or less illustrious deadheads, was produced for the first time in this city in the Knickerbocker Theatre last evening and received by a crowded audience with much good nature, more patience, and occasional favor.

Perhaps it is almost unnecessary to say of a piece which has been advertised so skilfully and persistently that it has no very substantial merit of its own to rest upon, although it has been pronounced a moral and dramatic masterpiece by several minor canons and a dean or two. Some enthusiastic clerical admirers have been inclined to doubt whether such a work could have been produced by a mere uninspired actor. But there is no reason to question Mr. Barrett's responsibility. The whole composition bears for the initiated unmistakable characteristics of his handiwork. His are the essentially theatrical and spectacular but not altogether uningenious situations, his the verbose, pretentious, and empty dialogue, his the fragments of pseudo-classicism culled from Valpy and Lempriere, his the fine old crusted sentiment, the queer admixture of Sardou's "La Tosca" and Milton's "Comus," his the light-hearted anachronism that enables the Christians of Nero's day to worship with a ritual and cathedral accompaniments. The profit of all these things is clearly his, and it would be a base and envious spirit that would seek to deprive him of the credit.

The play might be dismissed with a very few lines of conventional and kindly comment if it were not for the atmosphere of humbug that pervades it and the enormous amount of nonsense that has been written and published about it. There is no reason why it should be condemned or denounced. When measured by any artistic, literary, dramatic, or historical standard, it is, to be sure, an arrant sham, but its effect upon such spectators as can be influenced by it at all is likely to be wholesome. The spectacle of pagan voluptuaries in high revel, with all the allurements of wine, women, and song, has not always been considered a model entertainment for youth, but in this particular instance, as Mr. Barrett doubtless expected, the saintly example of the heroine and the conversion of the hero have been accepted as a sufficient spiritual antidote to all this carnal poison. It is only fair to add that Mr.

Barrett's vice, while it has a 'good deal of glitter, is not particularly enticing or dangerous. On the whole, as has been intimated, the intent and moral of the piece are good. The triumph of purity and faith over temptation, pain, and death is a noble subject, which must always appeal to the imagination, and the picture of oppressed innocence rarely fails to touch public sympathy, no matter how cheap and vulgar the frame in which it is set. As for the tale of Marcus Saperbus and Mercia, it is reasonable enough in itself, and has an abundance of precedent to support it. The weakness of it lies in the manner of the telling, in the manifest insincerity and trickery of it all, the feeble mockery of classic form, the Boeotian wit, and the insufferable and constant affectation of doing something that is never done. To read some of the English comments upon the piece, one might think that the martyred Christian had never been seen upon the stage before, and that Mr. Barrett had made a new dramatic departure. In this city, which is familiar with "The Gladiator" of Saumet, a really fine work, it is known how such a topic may be treated.

It is not improbable that "The Sign of the Cross" may succeed in New York, for it is crammed full of that resounding sentiment which pleases the multitude by its familiarity, and it is an exceedingly handsome spectacle. It contains, moreover, half a dozen scenes which have stood the test of many generations. The acting is not brilliant, but it is quite good enough for the play, and Mr. Charles Dalton, who plays Mr. Barrett's part, and therefore fills the greater part of every scene, is a virile and handsome performer, who is likely to become a popular favorite. The scenery is solid and rich and correct in essentials, and the costumes are costly and picturesque. The entertainment provided for the eye is of the most liberal kind. If the play should fail, it will not be the fault of the management.

No. 6. The New York Sun, October 4, 1906; reprinted from Brown, The American Theatre, pp. 176-178.

Moody's "The Great Divide" by John Corbin

Mr. William Vaughn Moody's new American drama, The Great Divide, which Henry Miller and Margaret Anglin presented last night at the Princess, is so bold and vital in theme, so subtly veracious and unaffectedly strong in the writing, that it is very hard in the few moments left by a tardy if excellent performance to speak of it in terms at once of justice and of moderation.

Yet it is abundantly clear that no play of the present season--a season unusually rich--has equalled it either in calibre or in execution, except only Pinero's His House in Order. And even this strikes less true and deep into the wells of human impulse and passion.

To say that it is the best product of the American drama thus far would doubtless be extravagant; yet the fact remains that it is inspired by precisely that fulness and wholesomeness of feeling, and is accomplished with precisely that technical firmness, the lack of which has thus far proved the cardinal defects of our most vivacious and amusing playwrights.

The fact is that Mr. Moody, who has already placed himself at the head of modern American poets, has not ceased to be a poet in essaying the stage--though his play is written in the simplest and most unaffected prose. And he has, furthermore, applied the finesse and precision essential in the true poetic craft to the no less rigid and requiring task of the dramatist. With the lesser order of writers it has been the lamentable custom to deal lightly in and insincerely with the theatre. Mr. Moody respects his new medium, copes with it courageously and with manful adherence to the simple truth of life, and masters it.

His theme is unusual--sensational, if you will. But it is unusual and sensational in the manner not of melodrama, but of true and original drama. The great divide of his title is the barrier which exists between the rigor and dry formality of old civilization and the larger and freer, if more brutal, impulses of the frontier.

An Eastern woman (Miss Anglin), left unprotected for a night on an Arizona ranch, is set upon by three drunken marauders, and to escape a worse fate promises to give herself in marriage to the least repulsive of them on condition that he will save her from the others. This Stephen Ghent (Mr. Miller) buys off one of his rivals, shoots up the other in equal combat and leads his Sabine

Woman--that was Mr. Moody's original title for the piece--to the nearest Magistrate.

The second act shows how the shame of the transaction eats into the soul of the proud and puritanical woman, until she leaves her enforced husband to bring up their child in what to her is respectability. The final act, which takes place in New England, represents the triumph of the husband, whose sincere native honesty and strength have developed in contact with a refinement new to him. The great divide has ceased to exist and the Sabine Woman becomes a willing captive to primitive, wholesome passion.

A story which seems destined to melodrama and the false heroics of sentiment is treated with simplicity that verges always on bareness. There will be those no doubt who deprecate the boldness of the theme; but they will be the first to condemn the play as slow and dull.

The method throughout, in so far as a work of such simplicity can be said to have a method, is that of understatement. One sits up and takes notice because it all happens so much more naturally and subtly than it was possible to imagine. No phase in the conflict and development of the two souls is neglected, and no word rises above the utmost austerity of realism. Mr. Moody has the courage to be true, because he has the vision to see the truth in its deepest and most vital aspects.

The acting throughout was pitched in precisely the key the play demands. Miss Anglin has never been more precise in the portrayal of the finer shades of character, and though she has had showier and more sensational parts she has never been more poignantly emotional.

At the outset she denotes with consummate fineness the kindling of the Puritan maiden toward the freer and more vital life of the West. And even in her first horror of the deed of the half drunken and altogether reckless Ghent, she manages to denote her fascination before his rough manhood. It is in the second intermediate act that she rises to the fullest achievement, for here she has to display the opposing impulses blindly yet potently struggling within her for mastery. It was in Zira that she displayed the height of her powers. Here she develops their depth and subtlety.

Mr. Miller has never been more simple and sympathetically convincing. He spares no trait of the recklessness of the initial deed of violence, yet manages to win regard for its passional simplicity. And in the end, when shame and sorrow have transmuted his impulses into gold, the man he has become

is still the child of the man he was. Under his touch dramatic character and dramatic emotion are one.

To Laura Hope Crews falls the part of a young married woman, the friend of the Sabine woman. It is full of amusing character and sprightly humor. At times it verges toward the function of a classical chorus. Polly Jordan is under suspicion of being the mouthpiece of Mr. Moody's thesis and his psychology. Yet the part is very naturally written, and as acted by Miss Crews takes on a high degree of lifelikeness and a humor which is as natural as it is effective in contrast with the prevailing sombreness of the play.

Robert Cummings was equally effective in the smaller part of a sensible and amusingly laconic miner in Ghent's employ, and Mrs. Thomas Whiffen portrayed a New England mother of the old school with her accustomed fidelity and accuracy in character.

Play and performance were applauded heartily and only too persistently. Both Mr. Moody and Mr. Miller were reluctantly forced to each make a brief speech. Beyond question the production is a popular success.

No. 7. The New York Times, November 23, 1915, p. 13, col. 1.

The Chief, a comedy in three acts by Horace Annesley Vachell, At the Empire.

The Earl of Yester John Drew
 Lord Arthur Wrexham Echlin Geyer
 Derek Waring George Graham
 Trinder Walter Soderling
 Thomas William Barnes
 Cynthia Vansettart Laura Hope Crews
 Daphne Kenyon Consuelo Bailey
 Mrs. Bargus Katherine Stewart
 Emil Bargus Thais Lawton

It may sound a bit ungrateful, and certainly it sounds strangely familiar when those coming from a placid and altogether agreeable evening spent with John Drew and a new comedy at the Empire, observe to all inquiring friends: "It's a typical Drew play." Yet there is no simpler or more intelligible way of reporting briefly such a pleasant premiere as took place at that theatre last evening, when "The Chief," a new piece in three acts, was presented to New York for the first time.

Despite a somewhat belated sally into Shakespeare and a more recent revival of an old romance, there is no possibility of mistaking what is meant by "a typical Drew play." It describes exactly just such a polite, conventional, cleverly phrased, unsubstantial, and thoroughly English comedy as this new one from the pen of the prolific Horace Annesley Vachell. "The Chief" is amusing, and it is worth a journey to the Empire just to see how nicely it is played by Mr. Drew and the delightful Laura Hope Crews.

Mr. Vachell is an Englishman who has retired from the presumably ennobling life of an American ranch to the greater comforts of a handsome English country seat. His publishers laud him in a pamphlet, on the cover of which is set forth the amazing and quite incredible statement that he is "an author who loves people more than things," but he has more substantial claim to fame in the form of a creditable shelf of novels from his pen and of late he has rather abruptly burst forth as a dramatist, with many plays on hand in all the stages from newly read manuscript to the dust of the store room. He has a very pretty, if not a flashing wit, and in "The Chief" he has overlaid a naively transparent, slightly old-fashioned and undistinguished plot, with a clever dialogue that makes charming, if not complete amends.

The new play at the Empire is bright. It calls irresistibly to mind a true story that is sometimes told to illustrate the way the ingenuous theatre-goer is wont to confuse player and part, "I just love to go to see John Drew," says the lady of the story, "He's so terribly witty." She will have a lovely time at "The Chief."

The Chief is the pet household name for the Earl of Yester, a middle-aged, mildly flirtatious lazily gallant peer of the sort Mr. Drew can play with his eyes shut. Yester, partly through diffidence, partly through indolence, and partly through the machinations of an acquisitive dowager, had let slip the chance to woo and win a charming girl who now, ten years later, meets him when she is a widow and he a widower. Though the dowager is still on the job, though another woman is snatching at hand, though he suspects that his pretty ward has conceived a passion for him, he will not be defrauded a second time. At last he has his way and the lady of his heart.

Mr. Drew plays the Earl of Yester with that consummate and expert ease and airy good humor which for many years have kept his friends many and warm. The first-act tear in the trouser leg and the third-act rumple to the hair do not in the least conceal the well-bred genial soul that has moved through most of his comedies. Probably the performance represents no heroic labor on his part, but it can be spoken of slightly only by those who do not recognize good acting unless it be accompanied by a completely disguising characterization.

As the reappearing heroine in Yester's life Laura Hope Crews has little to do and does it to perfection. She is one of the best comedienues on the American stage, and the grace of her playing is ever a pleasure to watch.

Lesser rôles are well played by George Graham, Consuelo Bailey and Thais Lawton. Mr. Graham, who did a bit exceedingly well last season in "The Law of the Land," is again an English secretary, and a good one, Miss Bailey, as the pert ward of the Earl, is almost as cunning as she intends to be, and that is saying a great deal. It would be better if Mr. Vachell--by cable and without expense--would write an American past for the ward in his text, something, at all events, to account for her very provincial speech which rather disturbs the calm of Hallicombe-on-Thames.

Miss Lawton does an ungrateful role with considerable ability, and doubtless it is due to the director's scheme for "The Chief" being innocent of surprises, that she gives away her past at the first opportunity by blenching, wrenching her features, and seeming about to swoon at each cue for any uneasiness of conscience. As Mrs. Bargus, the

scheming dowager, Katherine Stewart is a bit thick.

"The Chief" is produced nicely enough, with hearty approval audibly accorded the second act set. For some reason or other, a New York audience invariably applauds loudly whenever a room is decorated in flowered cretonne. Surely a producer is overlooking a short cut to success who does not swathe all his theatrical properties in that cheerful material.

"First time on any stage"--so ran the slogan on the program last night, the author thereof doubtless overlooking the earlier stages of the preliminary tour. However, the important thing to report is that "The Chief" has reached the Empire stage and there, with John Drew in fine form, it will provide for you very agreeable entertainment.

No. 8. The New York Times, November 9, 1927, p. 23,
col. 1.

The Play by J. Brooks Atkinson

Helen Hayes in Her Finest Part

Coquette, a play in three acts by George Abbot and Ann Preston Bridgers. Staged by Mr. Abbott; settings by Raymond Savoy; produced by Jed Harris, in association with Crosby Gaige. At Maxine Elliott's Theatre.

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Jimmie Besant | Andrew Lawlor Jr. |
| Dr. Besant | Charles Waldron |
| Norma Besant | Helen Hayes |
| Stanley Wentworth | G. Albert Smith |
| Joe Reynolds | Gaylord Pendleton |
| Betty Lee Reynolds..... | Una Merkel |
| Mr. Wentworth | Frederick Burton |
| Ethel Thompkins | Phyllis Tyler |
| Julia | Abbie Mitchell |
| Michael Jeffery | Elliot Cabot |
| Ed Forsythe..... | Frank Dae |

In making the rounds of the theatre, night after night, one seldom encounters drama and acting so perfectly mated and so absorbingly moving as "*Coquette*," put on at Maxine Elliott's last evening, with Helen Hayes playing more glamorously than ever before. So soon after the final curtain one finds it difficult to organize one's thoughts and impressions coherently. But perhaps it is sufficient to report in the first paragraph that all those associated in the writing, directing and acting of "*Coquette*" have woven it into a hauntingly beautiful drama, brimming with loveliness and pathos. Truly, it is difficult to report just how splendid an achievement "*Coquette*" appears to be.

And not solely on account of its story. George Abbott and Ann Preston Bridgers, the collaborating authors, have told an ill-fated Southern love story with infinite tenderness, humor and wit, hopeless tragedy, [sic] The charming and mendacious coquette of the title, Norma Besant, daughter of a Southern gentleman, finds herself seriously in love with a surly ruffian of the town, Michael Jeffery. Their affection seems to be genuine. Although Dr. Besant ceremoniously orders Michael from the house, the parting is not for long. When Michael returns, wild and eager with love, Norma and he deny themselves no longer. After a furious quarrel, in which Dr. Besant accuses Michael of maliciously fouling Norma's good name, the doctor shoots Michael deliberately. To defend him at the trial it is necessary only

to prove that Norma is chaste, as her father supposes her to be. But she is not. She is already carrying Michael's child. In the last scene, after a brave, gentle, sentimental interlude with her father, Norma shoots herself off-stage.

From this report of details it might appear that "Coquette" resembled familiar stuff of the stage. Splendidly cast and acted, not only by Miss Hayes at the peak of her career but also by everyone of her associates, "Coquette" emerges rather as a masterly portrait of human forces at play under normal and abnormal emotional pressure.

Here we perceive not merely the pyrotechnics of love in a drama, but the warmth and glow of character, the humors of match-making, the rebellious spirits of squeaky-voiced girls and clumsy boys, the intimate affections of a father for his children and the forgiving loyalties of friends and relatives drawn closely together. To celebrate the development of the main theme would be to neglect Jimmie Besant, treasurer of the local baseball team, reduced to D- in his Latin mark, or gauche Betty Lee, who thinks perhaps she is in love, but is not sure, trembling breathlessly on the threshold of life, or Stanley Wentworth, a decent youth, capable of any emergency. All these subordinate characters are fused into "Coquette" without a blemish on the surface of the play, and in rippling dialogue that understates--rather than exaggerates--its message.

Miss Hayes has never been seen to better advantage. Mocking the high gods of destiny, one even doubts whether she can ever again find a part to which she is so eminently well suited. From the coquettish dissembling, the bright irresponsibility of the first scenes, she passes to the anguish of the conclusion without changing key--from girlhood to sudden, cruel womanhood. What a range of emotion! And yet Miss Hayes encompasses it simply, frankly and sincerely, with as much depth as breadth. Never mawkishly sentimental, never cheaply hysterical, this Norma Besant commands the deepest sympathy in everything she does.

If there were time, one might convey, in some fashion, the virtues of Charles Waldron as the forbearing parent, Elliott Cabot as the hot-tempered but earnestly straightforward Michael, Andrew Lawler Jr. as the shy brother, G. Albert Smith as the neighbor and, particularly, Una Merkel as the disarmingly enchanting little girl who finds male company as irresistible as candy. The performance is all of one piece--blended and molded. In a newspaper review one can merely salute "Coquette" fervently. Those who see it will pay more intelligible tribute.

No. 9. The New York Times, Monday, November 5, 1860,
p. 1, col. 6.

Amusements

The curtain fell on Friday evening on the short but profitable season of Mr. Formes, and on Monday, the 12th, the little Ullman, like a giant refreshed by sleep, and all that style of thing, assumes, once more, command. This time an undivided command. Mr. Strakosch having entirely severed his connection with the Academy. Mr. Ullman will open under the most brilliant auspices. Mr. Strakosch and Miss Patti are about to join the Muzio-Colson forces in the West. M. Martzek has abandoned the idea of a musical invasion of Mexico, and will conduct the orchestra under Mr. Ullman. Messrs. Joel and Levy have retired from operatic engineering, and are about to proceed to Havana on a jewelry excursion. Their secession has thrown over the Academy a momentary gloom. Mr. Jacobson confines himself for a time to the management of a large and costly wardrobe.

The excitement of the elections has exercised a depressing influence on the drama in the past week. Miss Cushman had, nevertheless, drawn large audiences to the Winter Garden by her magnificent personations of Lady Macbeth and Cardinal Wolsey. Her portrait of the Cardinal was a master-piece of intellectual power. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday she repeats Meg Merrilies for the last time, and on Thursday will appear for the first time as Romeo. Mrs. Bowers, who is the pet of Philadelphia, comes on expressly engaged to play Juliet to Miss Cushman's Romeo. When last performing here, some two years since, she created an impression which many will be happy to renew. Mr. Couldock will play Friar Lawrence, making the cast one of unusual strength.

The opinions of the critics are divided on the merits of the new comedy at Miss Keene's but on the public it seems to have produced a very pleasant impression. Its chances of success could scarcely be tested in such a week as the last, but probably after the election excitement has passed it will enjoy a profitable run. The "Beggars' Opera," as given here, is bitter bad, and if both the charmers, Miss Willoughby and Miss Melven, were away, the public would feel happier.

Mr. Forrest's audiences are of a class not much affected by the excitement of the hour. They are usually around in rough times. His houses consequently have shown no diminution, Friday's being as large as any of the engagement after the opening night. On the off nights the visitors

sit like angels, few and far between. Such is the stern law of Theatricals. Even Mr. Forrest himself when, some years ago he played at the Park on alternate nights with Fanny Ellsler, could not draw more than from fifty to a hundred dollars to the house. Mr. Forrest plays Othello Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights.

At Wallack's "Playing with Fire" pursues the unbroken tenor of its success. Mr. Floyd will assume, after a few nights, the part of Pinchbeck, vice Mr. A. H. Davenport, who leaves to fulfill his engagement at New Orleans. Mr. W. Reynolds, who holds a pleasant place, in the memory of all habitués of Wallack's, has been engaged to resume his former position. Mr. A. H. Davenport takes, at the New Bowery on Friday evening, one of those complimentary benefits which come so rarely, and whose infrequency gives to them special delight. During the past two weeks he has been more than usually smiling and affable. Mr. Davenport is personally so generous and genial, that, apart from his merits as an artist, he could fill a house on one night in each week with friends.

Mr. W. R. Blake's residence on Greenwich-avenue was the scene, on Saturday evening of a very pleasant little festive event.

In the inspiration caught from the triumph of Lord Renfrew's entry into New-York, Mr. Blake promised to Hook and Ladder Company No. 6, who were active on the occasion, a donation of \$50, and, true as the dial to his word, this kindly artist summoned them on Saturday evening to a charming supper at his house, and in a speech full of wit and gentleness imparted the handsome gift. Whenever Mr. Blake takes a benefit he can rely on Hook and Lader No. 6.

On to-night, Messrs. Spalding & Rogers open their circus performances at the old Bowery. They introduce, in addition to their equine exploits, a ballet and various other novelties, and hope to make their entertainment a permanent delight. At the New Bowery, the Stock Company flourish on their own attraction without stars.

Barnum gives one week more of the Siamese Twins and "Joseph and his Brethren," and then brings on the Aztec Children, who created so great a sensation in Europe.

At Boston Mr. Barry is carrying on a negotiation for the engagement of Miss Cushman, after her Philadelphia engagement which follows that of New York. "Playing with Fire" has not found at Boston the same success it has met here. On the other hand, the "Dead Heart," which has failed here, is drawing crowded houses at the Walnut-street Theatre. Mr. Edwin Booth is playing a brilliant engagement.

On the other side of the pond the Bourcicaults [*sic*] appear to be sweeping things before them in the "Colleen Bawn" with an unbridled success. Their receipts of the first week are represented to have been 918 pounds; the second 943 pounds; the third 1,004 pounds. It is probable they will remain in England for some years, as an idea is afloat for the erection of a theatre after the American model for Mr. Bourcicault, either in Picadilly or Regent-street. For the present he gives up all the old Adelphi company to Webster, who opens them at Drury-lane and takes entire direction of the theatre. John Brougham made one of his happy speeches on his opening night, in which he spoke with a touching affection of his friends and associations here. He has evidently pleased much as a man and as an actor, but will hardly prove an attraction for any time. The emotional drama seems now alone to tell. Mrs. John Wood found that engagement she went over in such a hurry to fulfill a gay delusion.

All our folks on the other side agree in giving the preference to a New-York over a London audience. The Londoners are more enthusiastic at the end of acts, but they don't pick up the points and applaud each with its measure of appreciation so justly and so quickly as the New Yorkers.

The comparison between their theatres and our's is still more unfavorable to them. They are pictured as a Mosaic of miseries on the stage and in the dressing-rooms, a complication of discomfort in the front and altogether an intricate distortion to preserve a wet, gummy atmosphere in its glutinous condition, a compound of damp hay, escaped gas, orange peel and human nature, producing the smell called "stuff" in a perfection nowhere else attainable except in the cabin of a steamship.

Mr. Frank Warden, one of our best dramatic authors, in conjunction with Mr. Fitzjames O'Brien, is engaged on a new piece for Mr. Jefferson, who opens at the Winter Garden on Dec. 24. Mr. O'Brien has also a commission from Mr. Wallack to write a new comedy and burlesque for the opening of his new theatre. Mr. Booth has, we believe, accepted from the same brilliant writer a most powerful drama, in three acts, entitled "Blood is Thicker than Water." Mr. Harry Plunkett is engaged also on a changing drama for Mr. Jefferson. Mr. Sothorn tries this week, at Buffalo, Mr. Gayler's three act comedy, "Our American Cousin at Home," a sequel to the original Coz. So that our dramatists find an active market.

No. 10. The New York Times, November 2, 1924, Section VII, p. 1, col. 1-2.

Among the New Plays

From George M. Cohan to an American Pirandello--High Hopes--Playing "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" for What It is.

By Stark Young

The best level of all-round playing in town this last week was that of Mme. Simone's French company at Henry Miller's Theatre. The earlier production of Rostand's "L'Aiglon" was rather slovenly and a little absurd. Why it was given as an opening bill would be hard to say, unless perhaps as an appeal to beginners in French and seekers after such drama as is well known to students in finishing schools. None of the acting in "L'Aiglon" rose to distinction. In Pirandello's "Naked," however, the entire performance was good. Every supporting actor, André Bacque and Jeanne Grumbach especially, brought to his role a competent technique and a keen insight into the play, and Mme. Simone carried off the difficult and subtly modern part of the heroine with remarkable technical invention, emotional concentration and intelligence.

Two years ago Brook Pemberton produced "Six Characters in Search of an Author," and last season he repeated that play and followed it with "Henry IV." under the title of "The Living Mask," and Margaret Wycherly produced "Floriani's Wife." "Naked," then, makes the fourth Pirandello play to be given in New York.

This tragedy of Pirandello's, happily available for English readers in Arthur Lvingston's fine translation, revolves around the life of Ersilia Drei. The story shows her trying to construct out of the sea and confusion of living a definite individuality for herself. She involves herself with various love affairs, in the hope of making people pause for a moment and find an interest in her. She flees from the prospect of being nobody. She had wanted something beautiful and clear to be clothed in to die in. But no. Her fictions are torn from her and she dies naked, nobody after all.

As drama this play resembles Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler," and the same accusation of abnormality has been urged against it. But Pirandello's concern is not with the abnormal; to understand his choice to such a character for his central figure in this play we must know the general mind or philosophy beneath his work.

In the Pirandellian philosophy life is seen as a stream, an unceasing flux, a never-pausing force. This is the Pirandellian reality. In the midst of this force individuals and concepts for a moment arise. This is the fiction. They arrest this force and channel it into a momentary permanence and into the illusion of permanence. Individuality awakes, self-consciousness appears. Ideas, forms, facts, conventions come to exist. Between all these and the streaming force and current of life the struggle forever goes on. Out of this struggle between reality and fiction one way or another arise the situations that we see in life and in drama everywhere.

The ordinary life that we see under the ordinary normal conditions and in normal people is surrounded and stiffened and confined with these facts, conventions, forms, law, conceptions and social arrangements; and the presence of this life stream, this vital current, this flux, is less easily observed. In what we call the abnormal, in violent action, in vortices of passion, vision, enthusiasm and the fires of conscience this life in human beings breaks through [sic] and exposes itself more plainly. In such people as the hero of "The Living Mask," who masquerades as Henry IV. of Canossa fame, a historical figure that, because he is dead, has become fixed and permanent fact, in all those pathetic and grotesque figures of "Six Characters in Search of an Arthur," we see, as we see in this Ersilia Drei of "Naked," the river of life tearing through the dams, and obstacles set up in its midst, breaking down men's desires for permanence and duration in the midst of flux and change and exhibiting its eternal swirl and torrent and vital power. Ersilia Drei, then, is not normal, if you like, but she is not set forth from any morbid interest of degeneration on Pirandello's part, but only in order that this everlasting struggle between fiction and form with reality and flux, may be given dramatic exhibition.

"Naked" is an excellent example of Pirandello's point of view and of his technical method.

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Pirandello and the Commedia

As theatre, however, it is impossible to understand Pirandello's work without getting clearly in mind what it is at bottom is a highly and intensely modern form of the *commedia dell'arte* of Italian tradition, ancient and modern. Pirandello's drama, with all its psychological complexity and intellectual brilliancy, is really the vivacious plot and unceasing slapstick of the old popular *commedia* transferred to his mind. His characters have the

reality of mental experience only, not of actual daily life; they are types in the life of the brain exactly as the characters in the *commedia dell'arte*, Harlequin, Punch, learned doctors and their crew are never really human beings but figments of a burly fancy, types out of lusty, joyous time. The same gayety and bright current should run through the performance of Pirandello that ran through the *commedia* and made it not life but play. And this the French company in their performance of "Naked" seemed to understand; they played with the right degree of liveliness, of mental delight, of grotesqueness however tragic, and of speed.

.....

Hopes Out of Our Comedy.

There have been many who say that twenty years from now the drama that will survive from this generation of the American theatre will be that of George M. Cohan and his kind. Whether this be true or not is a question to think about. But looking at the case of Pirandello and his own inherited *commedia*, we may hope that some day, the sooner the better, some American dramatist may find a way to transfer into the region of serious and profound modern life and thought the liveliness and gusto and vitality that we have grown to expect in such plays as "It Pays to Advertise" or in our jaxx follies and revues. We may dream of this American Pirandello, not in the least of the same mind of [sic] quality as the Italian and in no way an imitation of him, but doing as he did and carrying the traditional theatre and the racial tang into new interpretations.

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"The Second Mrs. Tanqueray"

Two or three weeks ago on this page I suggested that "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" should be costumed in its period, the clothes of thirty years ago, and so perhaps date the play. After seeing the performance last Monday I wonder whether this would not have helped somewhat at least to avoid the effect that you got now and then of a certain nervousness on the actor's part, a hesitation about giving the play its chance. Much of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" is deliberate, pointed up theatre, with lines to be planted smack in the audience, with artful and quickly caught devices and epigrams. These the actors could be seen shying off from. Cayley Drumhale and Lady Orreyed missed many of their points; they seemed anxious to be as natural as possible. Even Ethel Barrymore slurred past figures of speech that were plainly meant to be effective as such; in the case of the intercepted letters, for example, Pinero's Paula says

that she has them here in her bosom; "they burn me like a mustard plaster." This line in intention at least is daring, it intends to make the audience laugh and cry at the same moment. Miss Barrymore shot past it and went on with the dominant emotion of the scene. Throughout the performance, and among all the actors, there were instances of this evasion of the play's essential character and school.

It would be better to confront "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" as it stands, period, method, theatre and all, and give it to us in its own kind. Certainly in Miss Barrymore's case at any rate there is enough power and intense conviction to carry the rôle over these hurdles of the forced and outmoded; she has nothing to fear.

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BIOGRAPHY

Louise Adams Blymyer, daughter of George Gilbert Blymyer and Cecilia Adams Blymyer, was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on December 10, 1905. Her secondary education was completed at the Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois. In 1927 she was graduated from Rockford College, Rockford, Illinois, with a Bachelor of Arts degree. For two years, thereafter, she taught at Oak Hall School for Girls in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1930 she received a Master of Arts degree from Northwestern University. From 1930-1938 she held the position of Assistant Professor in the English department of Berea College, Berea, Kentucky. During this time, four summers were spent in study: at the Central School of Speech, London, England, in 1931; at the University of Munich, Germany in 1936; at the University of Wisconsin in 1937 and 1938. For the years 1937-1939 she was granted a fellowship at Louisiana State University. She is now a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.


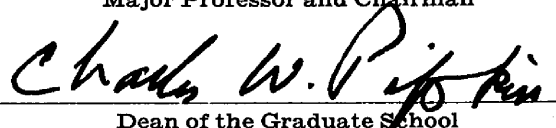
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Candidate: **Louise Adams Blymyer**



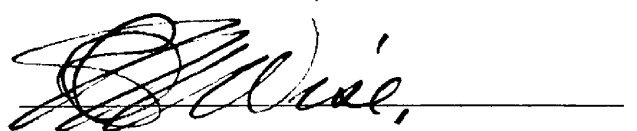
Major Field: **Speech**

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EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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